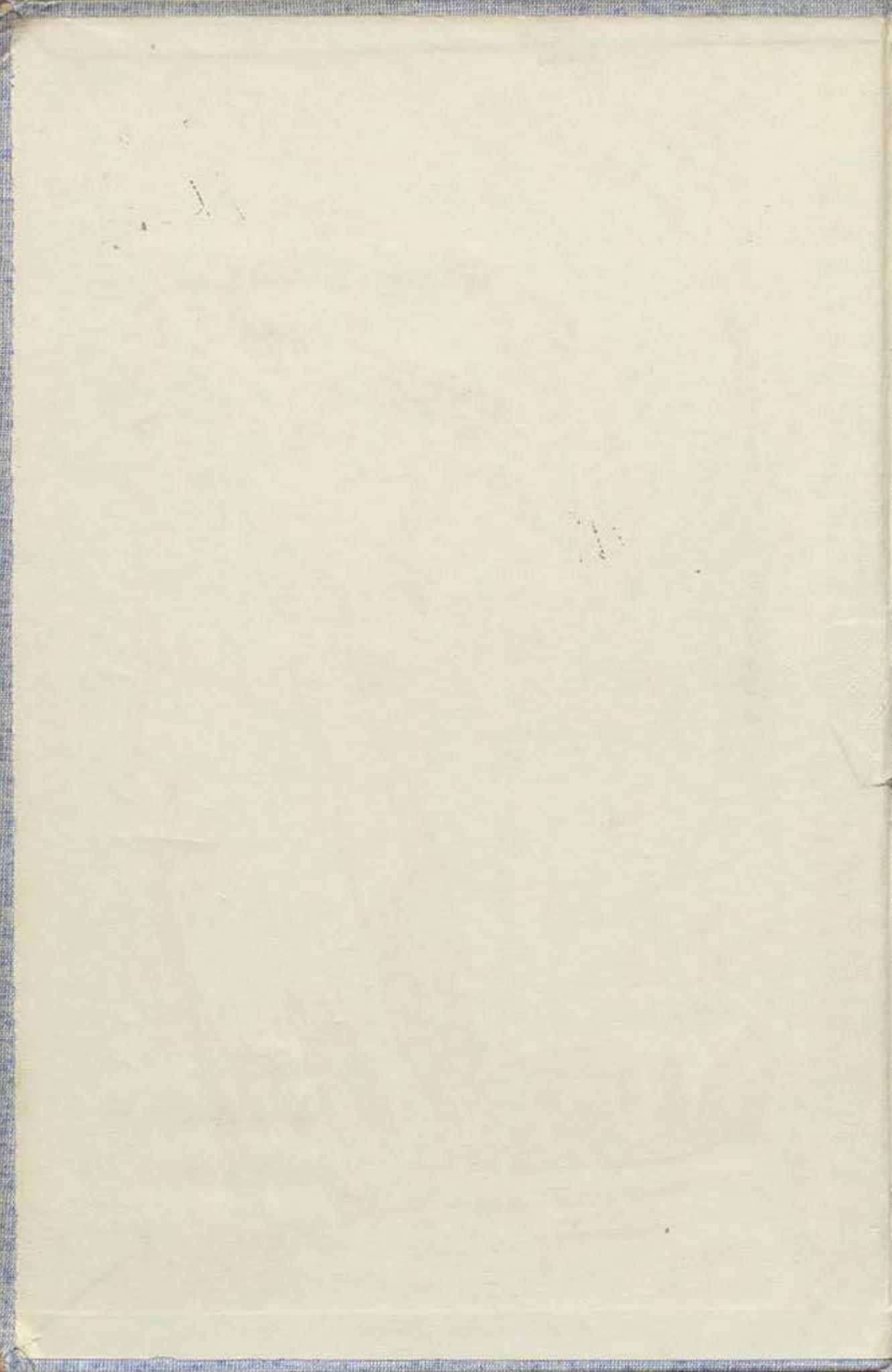


ANANDAMATH
THE
ABBEY OF BLISS

BY
BANKIM
CHANDRA
CHATTERJI



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THE ABBEY OF BLISS

K A TRANSLATION OF
Chatterjya alkyārā.
BANKIM CHANDRA CHATTERJEE'S
ANANDAMATH

By
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Vakil High Court, Calcutta.

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Prefatory Note

THOUGH not exactly the originator of Bengali prose literature, Bankim Chandra, more than any other single person is entitled to the name of the Father of Bengali prose. Before him the efforts of Bengali prose literature were in the nature of experiments in style and trials of its powers and resources. It was he who for the first time struck out for himself a path in the matter of style to which Bengali literature has clung since then with the utmost profit to itself. He tapped the real source of its greatest strength and opened out a glorious vista which Bengali literature has since then gone on making its own.

The writings of Bankim Chandra Chatterji first disclosed the vast capabilities of the Bengali language. He showed that it could be simple and natural but not vulgar, and solemn and serious but not stilted, and with his complete mastery over the language he demonstrated unmistakeably how it was capable of expressing all shades of feeling and thought with force and brilliance and with a variety of expression that came from its association with the rich Sanskrit vocabulary on the one hand and the vocabulary of a quick-witted cultured and resourceful people's dialect on the other. Both these sources of strength and versatility Bankim Chandra utilised with the utmost advantage, and the result was a style of Bengali prose which by its superior charm and elegance, as well as by its facile expression, has outlived the tentative styles that flourished before him and has set the model for Bengali prose ever since.

It is likely that in the struggle for existence the Bankim-ese style received an additional reinforcement from the mass of very superior literature that was written, mostly by himself and by others under his editorial guidance in the pages of his monthly, *Bangadarsana*. That literature was one of which any single generation might well be proud—if not for its volume at any rate for its quality. For the literary works of Bankim Chandra Chatterji still tower high above the ordinary run of books and proudly claim comparison, not with the rest of Bengali prose literature, for such a comparison is very obviously to its advantage, but with the literature of the world.

In the world of letters Bankim Chandra Chatterji may fairly claim an honoured place by the side of the greatest novelists of the world. His genius for fiction was superb and his execution of his work pre-eminently in his domestic sketches presents some of the master pieces of the art. It would be too much to say however that the high level of excellence is preserved in all his works. On the contrary, it is a comparatively few of his works that can be said to belong to the highest rank and there is perhaps only one, the *Krishnakanta's Will*, which can be regarded as perfectly faultless. The whole plot there has been deliberately conceived, the most artistic touches aptly bestowed and all embellishments provided, without the slightest redundancy or repetition,—it is in fact a perfect gem among novels and one that is fit to take its place beside the best of the world's fiction.

For his novels Bankim Chandra has often been compared with Sir Walter Scott and there is no doubt that the affinity between them was more than superficial. In style, though Bankim Chandra did not emulate the heavy tread of Sir Walter's yet the style of both share the same frank openness

and want of pretensions that serves to stamp it as one eminently suited for light literature. In their treatment of men, we find that both are impressed more with the broader features of human life than with the fine shades of feeling or thought that come in for the greatest share of the attention of an Austen, a Dickens or a Thackeray. Bankim Chandra does indeed display great powers of diving deep into the hearts of men and women and invites us to witness the play of the nicest sentiments and thoughts in some of his domestic novels. But still his great bent was, like Sir Walter's, for the broader aspects of human character.

Both he and Scott were of a highly romantic temperament and had a great fancy for adventurers and desperados of the Robin Hood type. There was a sentimental sympathy with this sort of characters in both which they could ill reconcile with their common sense with which both were uncommonly endowed. In Sir Walter this accounts for his Rob Roys and his Highland raiders, no less than for the Jacobite tendencies of his fictions, though he was one of the most loyal subjects of the Georges. In Bankim Chandra we find this leading him in enthusiastic assent a long way with bandits and outlaws of the type of Bhavani Pathak in his *Debi Choudhurani* and the *Children* in his *Abbey of Bliss*. Even among *Children* we find our author doting on the tumultuous and dashing spirit of Bhavananda more than on the gentler Jivananda. He gloats on the pranks of the free lances of the *Children*, such as burning and ravaging villages and outraging villagers, though in his heart of hearts he thoroughly condemns such roguery. Intellectual sympathy with these he has none, and he takes good care to dissociate himself from this lawlessness ; but even in seeking to expose the foolishness of *Children* as he pro-

fesses to do, he forgets himself and almost exults in deeds which his better sense soon condemns. His mysterious physician tells us that an empire could not be founded by robbery, and no good could come out of sin. In the preface he says that Revolutions are persecutions and revolutionists are suicides. But still, till one comes to the close of it, one does not feel that the author is not in complete sympathy with the lawlessness perpetrated by his *Children*.

Another point in which he strongly resembles Scott is intense patriotism. There can be no gainsaying the fact that both were the very best citizens of their respective kingdoms and that both were inspired with a patriotism of the highest type. Yet the sort of patriotism that strikes their fancy most is not the patriotism which they themselves breathe. Scott was a good Britisher but in his writings he is intensely Scotch. Bankim Chandra too was a good Indian but in his writings he is most prominently a Bengali. The sort of patriotism that appeals to his fancy is the local feeling of the Rajputs for their country and of the *Children* for mother Bengal. Intellectually he may have been a citizen of India and member of the Indian nation but in his inmost heart was the sentiment of an intensely exclusive Bengali Hindu.

Another accessory of a romantic temperament is its fascination for the preternatural ; and both Scott and Bankim Chandra had it to the fullest extent. To Scott however, it was a mere thing of love and an useful toy, to Bankim Chandra on the contrary it was a matter of deep seated conviction.

So far there is agreement between the two, but, in one important respect they differ. It has been said of Scott that he never had an idea that he was bound to leave the world better than he found it, yet this was the rooted conviction of Bamkim

Chandra, and it was the one with which he set to work. The aspect of a novelist's function which struck him most was that of a teacher and never in his writings does he forget his avocation of a born teacher of his people.

He was well fitted to fill the place. With nature's liberal endowment was joined in him a sound education in the literature of the past as well as in the ideas of the new civilisation which was yet only skimming the surface of Indian life. At this time English culture was knocking at India's gate and the vast wealth of India's ancient civilisation was waiting to be unearthed. The man who would seek to lead the people at such a time was one who knew how to manage both and could find a proper scope for the functions of each. Bankim Chandra was by his education well fitted for the task, for which nature did not grudge him a generous endowment of genius.

He was one of the earliest and best fruits of English education in India and his life-work was a sustained endeavour to bring about a synthesis of the ideals of the East and the West in the life of the Indian on lines so eloquently set forth in the concluding chapter of the present work. It was this ideal he consistently had in view and it was this lesson which he has sought to impart in a great many of his novels.

A novelist is always a teacher, but the teacher should not overshadow the story-teller. This golden rule Bankim Chandra fairly follows in most of his works. But in his *Abbey of Bliss* the teacher is much too evident. The result is assuredly a great take-off from its merit as a novel *per se* and, taken as such, this work is certainly deficient. But it is everywhere too evident that the author does not care to be taken as a story teller at all. The story is only the setting. The whole interest is concentrated in the message that he seeks to impart and

though the story is beautiful enough and its execution on the whole well worthy of a master's hand, yet it bears patent signs of haste and careless manipulation, and, in spite of the cobbling and tinkering that it had during its subsequent editions there are plenty of oversights that are surprising in the careful author of *Krishna Kanta's Will*. Redundance too, is not one of the vices from which our author has taken special care to defend himself in this work ; situations again are introduced which want explanation and which are inconsistent with previous statements. The absurd idea of Santi riding a horse with *sari* on is perhaps the crowning point of that epidemic of slips which seems to have taken hold of our author in this work.

The fact is that in this work our author was overwhelmed with the teaching he sought to impart and had very little attention to spare for the perfection of the details. The story therefore has very much the appearance of a noble figure, rough-hewn. All through the narration we notice the breathless haste of the author.—They story runs and with it runs our author's language, and he is in a desperate hurry to rush it on and finish. The work therefore partakes very largely of the nature of a parable, and as a parable of patriotism it has to be read in order to appreciate its depth of observation and intensity of feeling.

Even as a parable it has to be viewed from the point of view of feeling rather than of conception. For the type of patriotism which our author has here depicted is certainly not the richest in conception nor well worthy of emulation. It is its intensity in feeling and its richness in self-sacrifice that ought to commend it to all right-thinking people. The reader must however be warned against taking the parable

too literally. Our author's patriotism is not to be identified with the revolutionary propaganda of his adventurers in the present work. There is no place for revolution or aggressive warfare in his scheme of patriotism. Bloodshed and war Bankim Chandra looked upon as the detestable remnants of a barbarian age which were bound to pass away. If therefore he seems to have so much sympathy with revolutionaries of the type of his *Children*, it is not because his common sense would endorse similar procedure but because his natural instincts were largely in sympathy with them. And if there is one lesson more than any other that he seeks to impart by his *Children* it is that revolutionists though foolish are very often estimable men, inspired with lofty sentiments, and perfectly honourable in their conduct. They may fail, but their failure does not justify the world in branding them as infamous brigands. On the contrary, we have a great deal to learn from them. Their earnestness and singleness of purpose, their tenacity and resourcefulness, their courage in facing the immense odds that are arrayed against them, not only on the battle-field but everywhere in the existing order of things and above all their supreme indifference to their own interests,—these are traits of character which every reformer, every patriot and every fighter in a noble cause should lay to heart if he wants to succeed. Our *modus operandi* must needs be different from the suicidal path of revolution, our conception of national welfare and of the goal of national life may be altogether different, but let us all be inspired with the same sense of the nobility of our mission and the selfless zeal in serving the interests of our 'Mother' as the *Children*.

Two outstanding features of our author's conception of patriotism are its provincialism and its religious tone. As

for the provincialism in his patriotism, it is difficult to believe that Bamkim Chandra was a stranger to the idea of greater nationality which is the goal of cultured Indians of to-day. The explanation is rather to be sought in his romantic temperament which was deeply stirred by it, as much as was that of Sir Walter Scott by the parochial patriotism of his Highlanders and by the Scottish patriotism which even now makes itself felt in after-dinner orations in the St. Andrews Dinner.

As to the religious tone of his patriotism he perceived that the strongest sentiment of the Indian, as well as the most pronounced element in the Eastern civilisation, is the religious sentiment. To acclamatise Western culture in the Eastern soil then, we have to dip it full in the well of spiritualism. Nothing in Western culture can take root in the East unless it is inspired with the religious sentiment. The attempt to bring about this synthesis led him, not only to imbue patriotic sentiments with religion but also conceive nationality itself under the category of religion. He evidently thought that the only nationality India was capable of was a religious nationality ;—the sentiment probably which inspires people who talk about a Hindu Nation and a Mussulman Nation in the same Indian soil. To say the least, such an idea is absurd. We must have one Indian nation or no nation at all. Sectarian sentiments are ill dignified by being named in the lofty vocabulary of patriotism.

Two very sinister consequences are seen to flow from this conception of a religious basis of nationality in the present work. The first is the attempt to rehabilitate the Hindu Pantheon with new-fangled patriotic gods and goddesses, and the second is the morbid dislike of Mussulmans that seems to be indicated in this work. Neither would seem to be the least

profitable. As for the first, it sets a premium upon superstition and suggests a procedure which has been unhappily followed by some of our public men of to-day. If it is sought by this means to instil patriotism into the superstitious mind through superstitions, it fails sadly; for patriotism thus distorted can never develop into genuine patriotism and must remain a superstition for ever. It is a matter of common knowledge that superstitions, once rooted, are far more difficult to uproot than mere ignorance, and if permitted to remain, they may promote particular ends, but must be a dead block to all progress. Thus patriotism gains nothing by this distortion and it only helps to hinder the growth of true Indian Nationality by preventing the participation of Hindus and Mussulmans and other religious communities in a common patriotic work. The experiment therefore of degrading patriotism by basing it on superstition is not only fruitless but positively harmful.

The other is a more serious matter still. Now one thing that would be patent to every reader of this novel is that its heroes are frankly hostile to Mussulmans. This has led me to think thrice before placing the work before a larger public by translation. Our Mussulman friends have no doubt a good right to get offended at the way in which the anti-Mussulman sentiment has been developed in this novel. But several facts have got to be taken into consideration. Firstly, as I have already observed, our author is not to be too much identified with the sayings and doings of his adventurers in this book. Then again, the impression left by a study of the whole book is that the feeling was not so much against Mussulmans *quâ* Mussulmans, as against the anarchy and misrule under the Mussulman kings of the age and particular-

ly under Mir Jaffer who ruled at the time. It is notorious that that the times were bad beyond mention. Between themselves the East India Company and the Nawab had contrived to plunge the country into a state of distress which is looked upon, even by Englishmen as a tale of their disgrace. If they were so harassed, the people might well be angry with Mussulmans for their misdeeds and persecute them as they persecuted the people and even put to the credit of the community the misdeeds of its rulers. This is really all that the author seeks to depict. It would appear that in narrating the pranks of the free lances of his *Children* the author gives us only what would be natural in a body of uncultured men elated with victory and excited by activity. He does not justify them nor is he in sympathy with them. It would therefore not be quite fair to him to hold him responsible for these sayings and doings of the rabble which are so obviously wrong.

But with all this, one cannot but regret the anti-Mussulman sentiments that our author has so freely introduced in the present work. Whatever poetic justice there might be for those expressions considering the situation of the people whose careers are depicted in the novel, every true son of India to-day would sincerely wish that they had not existed in the work. I would willingly have expunged those passages from the translation were it not for a desire that the author should be presented in the translation as no better or worse than he is. The mischief is in fact past undoing, but may we not, Hindus and Mussulmans, agree to forgive our author's aberrations in the respect in view of the noble lessons in patriotism that he has given us. In justification of my attempt to present the work to a larger circle of readers, I may say, that it is this

consideration which has prompted me to translate the work in spite of its defects.

The work of translation has been by no means a plain sailing. Yet with all its difficulties the work has been one of love and a joy to me. I do not therefore feel entitled to claim any indulgence from the reader or quarter from the critic on that score. The work, however, has been rushed through the press for the importunity of my publisher and I shall not be the least surprised if faults are found to have been permitted to remain.

In conclusion, I have to convey my best thanks to my esteemed friend Mr. Prithwis Chandra Ray, the Editor of the *Indian World* for his constant encouragement and support, in placing every facility at my disposal, in looking over the proofs, and in making several very important suggestions. To the management of the Cherry Press too I am thankful for the expedition and promptness with which the work has been done.

N. C. S-G.

Author's Preface to the First Edition.

The wife of the Bengalee is very often his chief support: sometimes also she is not.

Revolutions are very generally processes of self-torture and rebels are suicides.

The English have saved Bengal from anarchy.

These truths are elucidated in this work.

Author's Preface to the Third Edition.

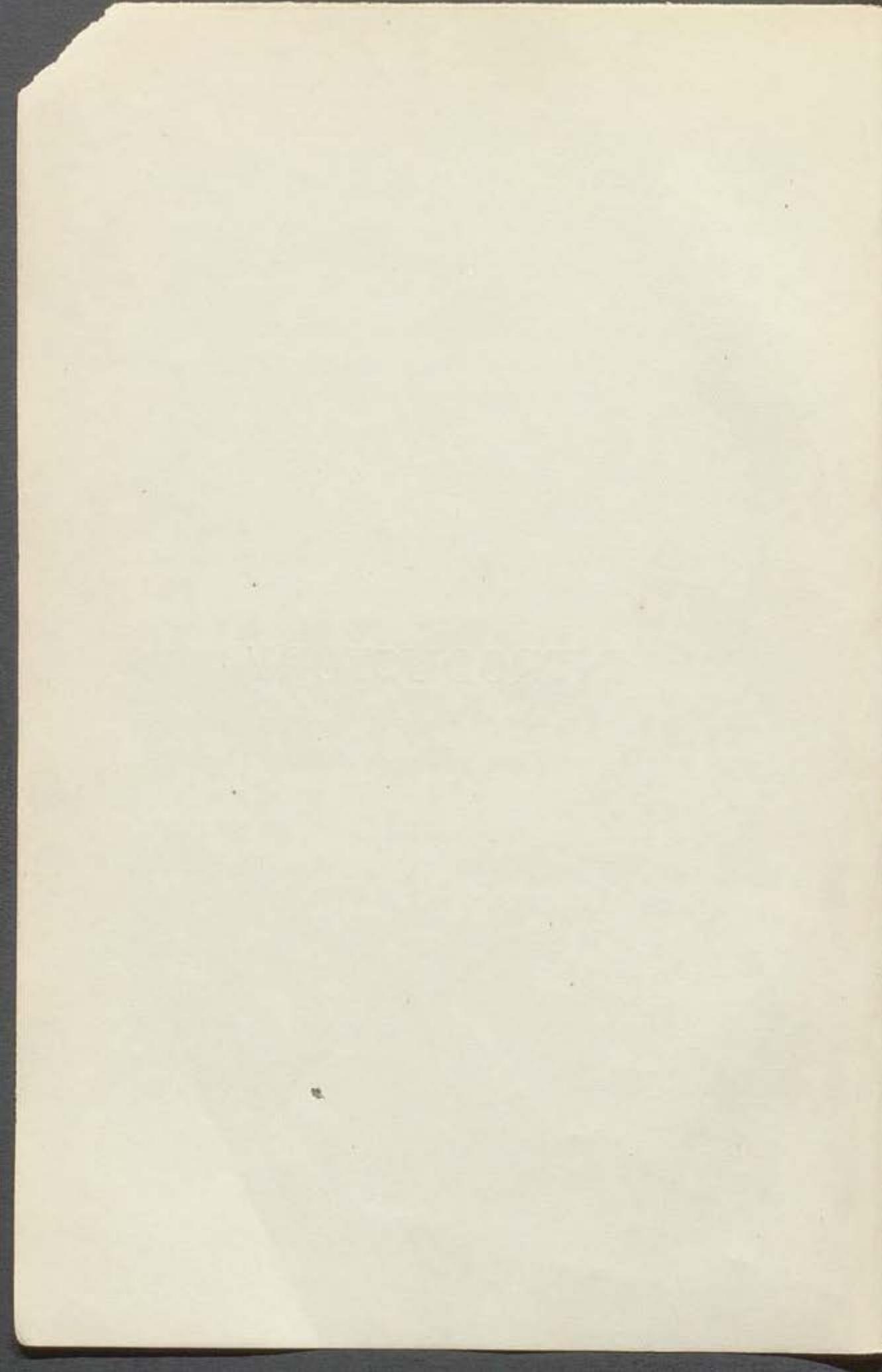
This time the true history of the Sannyasi Rebellion has been given in extracts from English works in the Appendix. The reader will see that it was a very serious affair.

He will also see that there is some difference between a history and a novel. The battles described in the novel did not really happen in Birbhum but in Northern Bengal. And, in the novel, the name of Major Wood has been used in the place of Captain Edwards. This difference I do not consider essential, for the novel is a novel and not history.

Author's Preface to the Fifth Edition.

It was found unnecessary to retain the differences referred to in the preface to the third edition and the necessary emendations have been made in the present edition. There has been alterations in some other respects also. Santi has been made a little gentler and the part of her life which was left to the reader to guess in previous editions has been explicitly set forth in a fresh chapter.

INTRODUCTORY



THE ABBEY OF BLISS

Introductory

It was a vast forest. The trees in it were mostly *sal*, but there were other trees too. Their tops and leaves ran into one another to form an endless line. This vast ocean of foliage, without break, without a hole, without, in fact, the smallest opening to let in light, stretched forth miles after miles, and miles after miles again, throwing up waves upon waves of green on the air. Below, there was the deepest gloom ; light was dim here even when the sun was at its height. It was a fearful wilderness and no man ever stepped into it. Save the eternal rustle of leaves and the yells of wild animals, no sound was ever heard within it.

Such was this forest,—vast, gloomy, and dense ; and the time we are speaking of was midnight ; and a very dark night too, even out of the woods—where nothing could be seen. The gloom within the forest was black like the darkness in the womb of the earth.

Birds and beasts were wholly silent. Myriads of beasts, birds, worms and insects lived in the woods, but not one made a sound. You might rather imagine the darkness that was there, but you could not think of that dead stillness of the wood in a world which so much

revels in sound. In that vast lonely forest, in that pitch-dark midnight, and from that unimaginable stillness came forth the words, "Will my desire not be fulfilled."

When the sound died away, the woods sank back into silence. Who would think then, that a man's voice had just been heard in the woods? Soon after, the words were heard again; again the stillness was disturbed, and a human voice rang forth: "Will my desire not be fulfilled?"

Thrice was the ocean of gloom thus stirred before the answer came, "What can you pawn for it?"

"Even my very life."

"Life is a trifle," was the answer, "every one can give it up."

"What more have I got? What more could I give?"

The answer came: "DEVOTION."

PART I

1814

Chapter I

On a certain day in the year 1176 B.S., the sun was shining hot in the village of Padachinha. The village was full of houses but you could find very few men there. There were rows of shops in the market, rows of huts in the fair, and mud houses in hundreds and brick buildings, high and low, here and there. But to-day not a sound was to be heard in any one of them. The shops were closed and the shop-keepers gone, no one knew where. It was the market-day of the village but no market was being held. It was the day for giving alms, but no beggars did turn up. The weaver had left his loom and was wailing on the floor of his house ; the trader wept with his baby in arms unmindful of his trade ; alms-givers had stopped their charity ; *adhyapaks* had closed their schools ; and children too, it would seem, did not venture to cry. There were no men in the streets, no bathers in the tanks, no householders in the houses, no birds in the trees, no cows in the pasture lands,—only plenty of jackals and dogs roamed about in the mortuary. One big house whose huge pillars could be seen from a distance shone in that wilderness of houses like the peak of a mountain. There was not much of 'shining' in it however ; for its doors were shut and rooms unoccupied ; it was devoid of sound and difficult even for the wind to get in. In the rooms within, it was dark

even at midday and in that darkness pensively sat two human beings like a couple of full-blown flowers at midnight.

The famine was before them.

In 1174 there was a bad harvest. So food became a little dear in 1175. The people were in distress but the State realised its dues to the last penny. Having paid down the royal dues, the poor people satisfied themselves with but one meal a day and struggled on. There was a good shower during the rains of 1175 and the people thought with joy that the gods had perhaps smiled on them. The shepherd began his carol again and the peasant's wife began to tease her spouse for her silver armlet. Suddenly the gods turned angry in Aswin, for there was not a drop of rain in that month and the crops in the field dried up into hay. Those who reaped a harvest at all had their crop bought up by the State for the support of its army. The people therefore starved. At first they had one meal a day, then they went on half rations, and then starved the whole day. The small *Chaitra* harvest that they gathered was not enough for anybody. But Mahommad Reza Khan, the officer in charge of the State revenue, thought that he would be a favourite of the authorities by a stroke at this time, and forthwith enhanced the assessment by 10 per cent. There was a howl of grief all over Bengal.

First, people began to beg. But soon there was none to give alms ;—they then began to starve.

Then they began to suffer from diseases. They sold their cattle, sold their ploughs, ate up the seed grains, sold their houses and their holdings, and at last their daughters and sons and wives. Then there could not be found buyers of men, everybody wanted to sell. They then fed on leaves, grass and weeds for want of other food ; the lower classes and wild tribes fed on dogs, mice and cats. Many fled and died of starvation away from their homes. Those who did not fly away died from starvation or from diseases brought on by eating unwholesome food.

Diseases had a jolly time of it. Fever, cholera and small pox prevailed, particularly the last. People died in every house from small-pox. There was none to touch them, treat them, or give them a drink. No one looked at any body else. No one removed the dead. The fairest bodies lay down to rot in the mansions. When small-pox once made its appearance in a house, the householders instantly took to flight, leaving the patient behind.

Mahendra Singha was a very rich man of Padachinha, but rich and poor fared alike at this time. In that dire day, his relatives and friends, his servants and retainers, had all left him. Some had died of disease and others had fled. Of his entire household there remained now only himself, his wife and a little child—a daughter. It was of them that we were speaking.

Mahendra's wife Kalyani ceased musing and went to the cow-shed to milk the cow herself. She then

warmed the milk, fed her child and went away again to give some hay and water to the cows. When she came back, Mahendra asked, "How long could we go on in this way?"

"Not very long, I am sure," said Kalyani, "but we must go on as long as we can;—so long, at any rate, as I live. You may then go away to town with our daughter."

"If we ever *have* to go to town, why then should I let you suffer so much now? Come let us go at once."

They then had a long discussion over it. "Do you think it would be any good our going to town?" asked Kalyani.

"I am afraid," answered Mahendra, "the town may have grown as desolate and as impossible to live in as here."

"But perhaps," said Kalyani, "we might fare better by going to Murshidabad, Cassimbazar, or Calcutta. It is by all means needful to leave this place."

Mahendra said, "This house is full of the hoarded wealth of generations. Do you know that all this will be plundered by thieves?"

K. "If they really come to plunder, can we two save it? If life is lost, who will enjoy the riches? Let us now lock up our doors and be off. If life is spared us, we shall come back to enjoy them again."

Mahendra said, "I don't know if you will be able to go on foot as you will have to; for *Palki* bearers are dead, and, as for bullock-carts, if you have

the driver you have not the cattle, and if cattle is found you don't find the driver."

K. "You need not fear, I shall walk all the way." But she thought at heart, "If I can't, what harm? I shall die on the road, but these two will, at any rate, be saved."

The next morning the husband and the wife put their house under lock and key, let the cattle loose, provided themselves with some cash, took the child in their arms, and started for the capital. When they were about to start, Mahendra said : "The road is hard and robbers are prowling about everywhere, we should not go without arms." So saying he went back into the house and returned with a gun and some powder and shot.

Seeing this, Kalyani said, "Since you remind me of arms, will you just hold Sukumari awhile and let me too fetch mine?" So saying she gave the child to Mahendra and entered the house, Mahendra observing, "What arms are *you* going to have?"

Kalyani got some poison in a pill-box and hid it under her garments. She had taken care to provide herself with it before this, not knowing what might happen to her at a time like that.

It was the month of Jaistha (May-June). The sun was furious, and the earth like a furnace. The wind spread fire all round, the sky looked like a canopy of heated copper and the grains of street dust were like sparks of fire. Kalyani perspired horribly ; she sat down to rest now under the *babla* and now under the date-palm

drank the murky water of ponds and then walked again, suffering terribly. Mahendra held the child in his arms and fanned it now and then. Once they sat down to rest under a tree decked with dense green foliage and fragrant flowers, and fondly encircled by creepers. Mahendra was surprised at the patience with which Kalyani roughed all this out. He soaked his cloth in the pond which was there, and with its water drenched the face, hands and feet of Kalyani and himself.

Kalyani was slightly refreshed, but they were both oppressed by hunger. This they could stand, but the hunger and thirst of the little child they could not bear. Therefore they walked on and on,—they swam so to say across the torrent of fire, till at dusk they reached an inn. Mahendra fondly hoped that there he would be able to refresh his wife and child with cool water and give them some food to keep them from starvation. But alas, he found no one in the inn. Big huts lay there, the men had all fled. Mahendra looked about. He then made his wife and child lie down in one of the rooms, and coming out shouted to the top of his voice. No one answered. Then he said to Kalyani, "Do just gather up courage to stay alone for a while ; if there is a cow in the land, Srikrishna help me, I'll get some milk." So saying he walked out with an earthen pitcher in hand,—there were many such lying about in that place.

Chapter II

Mahendra went out. Left alone with her daughter in that lonely place and in that gloomy room, Kalyani was anxiously looking about on all sides. She was struck with fear. There was nobody there, no trace of a human being ; the howling of dogs and jackals at intervals were the only sounds that reached her ears. "Why did I let him go?" she thought, "we might as well have borne the hunger and thirst for some time longer." She thought of shutting all the doors, but alas, the doors had none of them a latch. Thus looking about, her eyes fell on something like a shadow at the door before her. It seemed like the figure of a man, yet did not exactly look like one. Something very lank, shorn, and very dark, naked and horrid—something like such a man stood at the door. Presently the shadow seemed to raise a hand. It seemed to beckon to somebody with the long choppy fingers of a very long skin-and-bone hand. Kalyani's heart-blood dried up with fear. Then another shadow like it—skinny, dark, tall and naked, stood beside the first. Then came another and another and yet another—oh so many they were ! Slowly and silently they began to enter the room. The dim room became on their entrance as dreadful as a mortuary at midnight. The ghost-like beings then surrounded Kalyani and her daughter. Kalyani all but fainted away for fright. The dark and skinny men then took her up

with her daughter and carried them out of the room, across the field, into a forest.

* * * * *

Mahendra came there soon after, with milk, for his wife and child, in the pitcher he had carried. But there was no one in the room. He looked about, and then called aloud by his daughter's name and his wife's; no answer, no trace of any human soul could be found anywhere.

Chapter III

The wood in which the outlaws laid down Kalyani was a very beautiful one. There was no light, and no eyes to appreciate the beauty of it however. It therefore remained unseen like the beauty of a poor man's heart. There might be no food in the country, but, for all that, the woods did not lack flowers, and the odour of these seemed to make even that darkness luminous. The ruffians put Kalyani and her daughter down on a clean spot covered with soft grass and themselves sat round her. They then began to talk about what they might do with her,—they had of course appropriated, before this, every bit of ornament that Kalyani had on her person. A party of them were busy dividing the spoils. This done, one of the robbers said : "What shall we do with gold and silver ? Take one of my trinkets any of you and give me a handful of rice instead. I am dying with hunger. I have had nothing more than leaves to eat to-day." When one showed the way, all the rest began to clamour in the same strain. "Rice", "Rice," "Dying with hunger, don't want gold and silver," they cried. Their captain sought to assuage them, but no one would listen. Words grew hot, abuses were freely used and a fight was imminent. In a rage every body threw at the captain the trinkets that had fallen to his share. The captain in his turn struck one or two, when all of

them fell on him and began to strike him. He was famished and weak, and so he fell dead after a few strokes. Then of the hungry, irate, excited and senseless ruffians one said, "We have delighted in the flesh of dogs and jackals! Now that we are dying with hunger, come, let us eat this rogue to-day." Then every one shouted in delight "*Jai Kali*"—"Bom Kali! To-day we will eat human flesh." So saying the lank and shorn, black and ghostly, shapes began to laugh and clap and dance like fiends. One of them set about lighting a fire to roast their captain. He got together some dry creepers and wood, and with a flint and iron set fire to the mass. As the light began to glow, the green leaves of the surrounding trees—mangoe, lemon, jack, palm, tamarind, date and others,—slowly came to view. Here a leaf caught fire, there a grass shone bright with the light; at other places the darkness grew thicker. When the fire was ready, one was about to throw the corpse into it when another said, "Tarry, my man, if live we must on the *noble meat* today, why then eat the stiff flesh of that old wretch? Let's eat what we have secured to day; let us roast that tender girl." Another said, "Roast something—anything—boys, can't bear the hunger any more." And they all greedily looked to the spot where Kalyani lay with her child. But lo! the place was empty; neither mother nor child was there. She had made good her escape while the robbers were busy quarrelling, having silenced the child by putting her to suckle. Seeing that their prey was gone

the fiendish ruffians rushed out on all sides, yelling like beasts. There are times when man becomes little better than a beast of prey.

Chapter IV

The wood was very dark. Kalyani could not find her way in it. There was hardly any path through the thick crowd of trees, herbs and thorns. Added to that, it was intensely dark. Still Kalyani pushed her way into the forest through the trees and thorny bushes. Now and then a thorn would prick the child and the little thing would cry and the ruffians would shout with redoubled zeal. Thus did Kalyani make her way into the thick of the forest drenched with blood. Then the moon rose. Till then Kalyani had fondly hoped that the outlaws would not be able to see her in the dark and would desist from the pursuit. But now that the moon was up, she could entertain such a hope no longer. From the sky the moon showered her silver beams on the tops of the trees and the gloom within grew softer with light. And streaks of light came through openings here and there and peeped into the dark. The higher the moon rose, the more light got into the forest and the gloom retired more into its depths. Kalyani with her daughter began to retire into deeper woods. The ruffians rushed from all sides shouting all the more, and the child began to weep all the louder for fear. Then Kalyani stopped and would run no more. Sitting on a thornless and grassy plot of land under a big tree, with her daughter in her arms, she only cried, "Where art Thou Whom I daily

worship, to Whom I daily bow and trusting Whom I could enter even this wild forest ? Where art thou, O Madhusudan." Kalyani was weak with hunger and thirst, and now from the intense fervour of her devotion, she slowly lost all physical sensations and in her inner consciousness she heard in space a heavenly voice chanting the various favourite names of Vishnu.

From childhood Kalyani had heard in Puranas that the heavenly saint Narada wandered over the world chanting the divine name of *Hari* to the accompaniment of his harp. That vision was now conjured up in her mind. Inly she saw the colossal figure of the great saint, with a complexion of faultless white and with flowing white locks and beards, passing in his white garments through the azure sky, lit with silver moonbeams and singing the name of God to the accompaniment of the *Vina*.

Slowly the music drew nearer and became more audible. It drew nearer and grew clearer still, till at last the song rang the woods to the echo just over her head.

Kalyani then opened her eyes. In the misty moonlight of the woods she saw standing before her the glorious form of the hoary saint with a complexion of faultless white, and with milk-white garments on, his hair and beards flowing in waves of snow. Half dreaming, she thought she would bow her head to him, but as she lowered her head to make her salute she fell senseless on the ground.

Chapter V

Within this wood there stood a large monastery on a large piece of land with broken stones all around. Antiquarians would perhaps say that it was a Buddhist monastery in old days and was subsequently converted into a Hindu one. The buildings were two-storied. Within them were many temples and in front was a canopied yard. Most of the buildings were surrounded by walls and so shaded by trees outside that one would not think there was a building here, even if one looked in the daylight and from close quarters. The buildings were broken at many places but you could see by daylight that those places had been repaired of late. From the very sight of those buildings you could at once infer that there was human habitation within this deep inaccessible forest. In one of the rooms of this abbey a big log was burning, and as Kalyani first regained her consciousness in it, she saw before her, the great man of hoary hue, with milk-white garments on ! Kalyani looked again with surprise, for she could not recollect things yet. Then the great man said, "Mother, this is a place of the gods, you need not be afraid. There is a little milk there, drink that and then I shall speak to you."

Kalyani understood nothing at first. Then as she grew a little steady, she took the skirt of her cloth round her neck and bowed herself before the great man.

He blessed her, and, getting a fragrant earthenpot from another room, boiled the milk on the fire that was burning. When the milk was ready, he gave it to Kalyani and said "Mother, give some to your daughter and take the rest yourself—you may talk to me later on." Kalyani joyfully began to feed her child. Then the saint walked out,* saying, "You need have no fear till I come back."

Coming back presently, he found that Kalyani had fed her child but had taken nothing herself. There was now almost as much milk as he left, only a little having been used. "Mother," said he, "You have not taken the milk ; I am going out again ; I wont come back till you have taken it."

With this, the saintly man was going out again when Kalyani bowed to him and folded her arms as if she would speak.

The anchorite asked, "What do you want to say?" Kalyani said, "Do not bid me take the milk, there is some bar to it ; I will not take anything now."

Then the anchorite feelingly said, "Tell me what bar there is. I am an anchorite and a celebate. You are as a daughter to me. What can there be that you may not like to tell me? When I brought you senseless from the woods, you seemed to be very much pulled down with hunger and thirst. How can you live without food?"

Kalyani's eyes grew wet as she said : "You are a

* This and what follows refers to a point of etiquette in Bengal Hindu Society where a lady does not consider it consistent with her modesty to take food before males or strangers.

god, and I will tell you. My husband is yet unfed. How can I eat or drink till I meet him or learn that he has had some food?" *

The monk asked "Where is your husband?"

"That," said Kalyani, "I do not know. The outlaws brought me away when he had gone out to look for some milk." Then the anchorite asked her question after question and obtained every information about Kalyani and her husband. Kalyani did not give him her husband's name, in fact she could not do so† ;—but from other clues the monk came to recognise her and said "You are Mahendra's wife?" Kalyani did not answer ; she looked down modestly and threw a splinter of wood on the fire on which the milk was warming. Then the anchorite said : "You do as I bid you ; drink the milk, and I shall get news of your husband. I won't go till you have done it."

Kalyani inquired if there was any water in the house. The monk pointed to the pitcher. Kalyani put on the palms of her hands together in the shape of a cup and the anchorite filled it with water. She brought it to his feet and asked him to sanctify it with the dust of his feet. The monk touched it with his toe, and Kalyani drank away the water and said, "I have drunk nectar, pray bid me not take

* A Hindu wife would never partake of food till her husband has had it.

† It is considered indelicate, nay, even a sin, in orthodox Hindu Society for a wife to utter her husband's name.

anything more. I will take nothing more till I hear of my husband." The monk urged no more. "You are safe in this temple," said he, "stay here while I go in search of your husband."

Chapter VI

The night was far advanced and the moon just overhead. It was not a full moon and the light she threw was not very bright and lighted in a very indifferent way an extensive plain. In the dim light that was there, you could not discern the other side of the field nor say who or what was there. The whole thing looked like a lonely and limitless abode of fear. Through it lay the road from Murshidabad to Calcutta with a little hill beside. On the hill were plenty of mango and other trees whose tops hissed and shone glistening in the moon light. The dark shadows on the black rock shivered in response. The celebate stood upon the hill-top silently listening,—to what, we cannot say. There was not a sound to be heard in the all but endless plain save the murmur of leaves. Near the bottom of the hill was a little jungle between the hill above and the road below. We cannot say what he could hear from that spot, but the celebate went that way. Getting into dense forest he saw in the thick darkness under the trees, rows of men—tall, black and fully armed,—their clean arms glistening in the straggling moonbeams that came through breaks in the foliage. Two hundred such men were sitting there and not one did speak. The celebate slowly came among them and made a sign. No one rose, no one spoke, and no one made a sound. He walked along the line in

front of them peering at every one's face and watching every one with care, as if he was in search of somebody he could not find. After a long search he stopped before one, touched him and made a sign. He instantly rose and the celebate took him to a distance. The man was young; his winning face was overgrown with dark hair and he owned a strong and charming frame. He wore the saffron robe and his body was pasted with sandal.

"Bhavananda," the anchorite asked this man, "do you know anything of Mahendra Sinha?"

"Mahendra Sinha," said Bhavananda, "left his house today and was on the way, when at the inn—" At this the celebate interrupted him, "I know what happened at the inn. Who did it?"

"Rude rustics, I ween.—At this time the very peasants of the village have turned robbers for hunger; and in good sooth who is not a robber now? We have fed on loot to-day; two maunds of rice were going for the Kotwal and we secured that for the gratification of our sacred selves."

The celebate smiled, and said, "I have rescued Mahendra's wife and child from the hands of the outlaws; they are now in the Abbey. Now, I charge you with the task of finding out Mahendra and restoring to him his wife and child. As for the work here," he added, "I doubt not but Jivananda alone would be able to do it."

Bhavananda agreed, and the celebate left the place.

Chapter VII

To be musing at the inn would do no good, thought Mahendra, and he left that place. He was going to town to make a search for his wife and child with the aid of the police there. He had not walked a long way, when he found a number of sepoys marching along in line with some bullock-carts. In 1176 B. S., Bengal had not yet come under British Rule. The English were then the Dewan of Bengal. They raised the revenue of the province but they had not yet then taken up the work of protecting the life and property of its people.

The work of collection then lay with the English and that of the protection of the life and property of the Bengalees lay with the wretched traitor, Mir Jaffer. Mir Jaffer was not able to protect himself, far less the people under his rule. He smoked opium and slept ; the English made collections and wrote despatches ; the Bengalee wept and wofully walked to ruin.

Thus the revenue was due to the English, but the administration lay with the Nawab. Now, at each place where the English raised the public dues they had employed a collector. But the revenue thus raised had to be sent to Calcutta. Men might starve and die, but the collections could not wait. Well, but the whole sum could not be got up anyhow. For, if mother earth refuses to yield wealth people cannot beget it. How-

ever, what had been raised was being sent laden in carts to the Company's treasury at Calcutta. In those days the fear of being robbed was great and so fifty armed sepoy marched in rows, with bayonets drawn, before and behind the carts. Their commander was an English soldier ; he was on horse-back and came last. The sepoy could not walk by day for the heat of the sun and were therefore marching by night. As they were marching they came in Mahendra's way. He stood by the side of the road, as it was quite filled up with carts and sepoy. Still the sepoy *would* jostle against him. It was not the time to quarrel, thought he, and so Mahendra left the road and stood near the water beside.

Then a sepoy said, "There's a robber running away." He was confirmed in his belief on seeing the gun in Mahendra's hand. So he made for Mahendra, caught him by the neck, suddenly gave him a blow with an imprecation on his lips, and snatched away his gun. With an empty hand, Mahendra could but strike back with his fist ;—needless to say, he was very angry. The redoubtable sepoy reeled at the blow and fell senseless on the spot. Then several sepoy fell on Mahendra, dragged him by force to their captain and reported to him that the man had killed one of their company. The *sahib* was smoking his pipe and was a bit worse for drink. He only said : "Catch hold of the *sala* and marry him." The sepoy did not very well see how they could marry an armed robber ; but they thought, the captain would reconsider his orders when he came back to his senses and they might be

spared the 'marriage.' So 3 or 4 of them tied Mahendra's hands and feet with the ropes of a cart and put him on it. Mahendra saw it was useless to show fight before so many men ; and he thought it scarcely worth his while to be free, even if he could be so by force. For, he was then struck with grief for the loss of his wife and child and did not wish to live. The sepoyes secured him well to the wheels of the cart and then they marched on with slow and solemn steps with their trust as before.

Chapter VIII

Under the orders of the monk, Bhavananda walked towards the inn where Mahendra stayed, softly chanting *Harinam*. He thought he could get a trace of Mahendra there.

At that time there were not such roads in the country as the English have now built. To come to Calcutta in those days from one of the towns in the interior you had to walk by the primitive roads built by the Mussulman Emperors. In going to town from Padachinha, Mahendra had to walk from south to north. Therefore he met the sepoys on the way who were marching from north to south. In walking from Talpahar to the inn, Bhavananda too walked to the north. So, he too shortly met the sepoys guarding the treasure on the way. Like Mahendra he too stood by to let them pass.

Now, naturally, the sepoys had thought that dacoits would try to plunder the treasure. Besides, they had caught a real robber on the way. So when they saw Bhavananda too stand aside like Mahendra they were easily convinced that he was another outlaw. They, therefore, instantly caught him.

Bhavananda smiled and said "Why, my friend, what's the matter?" A sepoy said "*Sala*, you are a robber." "You can well see I am a devotee in the holy dress. Does a robber look like this?" inquired he.

"In sooth," said the sepoy, "many a rogue of a monk

and anchorite have turned bandits now-a-days." So saying he pushed Bhavananda by the neck. Bhavananda's eyes flashed in the dark, but he did not resent it ; he only said : " Sire, command me what you want me to do." The sepoy was pleased with his submissive tone and said, " Take, *sala*, take a load on your head," and put a kit upon his head. But another sepoy suggested " He'll escape, better tie up him on the cart where you have bound the other *sala*." At this Bhavananda grew curious to see the person they had bound down. So he threw away his load and gave a smart slap to the sepoy who had put it on his head. The sepoy thereupon tied him up too and threw him on the cart beside Mahendra.

The sepoys again began to make a great noise as they marched carelessly along, and the cart wheels went on creaking. Then Bhavananda slowly said, in a voice that Mahendra alone could hear : " Mahendra Sinha, I know you, and I am here to help you. You need not know now who I am. Take care to do what I tell you now. Hold the rope on your hand on the cart-wheel." Mahendra was startled, but silently did as Bhavananda asked him to do. In the darkness he approached the wheel and placed his hand on it, so that the tying rope just touched the wheel. By and by the friction cut away the rope. Then he cut the bond of his feet in the same way. Thus freed, he lay still on the cart without an effort to escape. In the like manner, Bhavananda too cut his bonds. Both lay still.

The road of the company lay through the spot where

the monk had looked about from the highway. When they came near the hill they saw a man standing on a small mound. Seeing his dark figure carved on the moonlit azure sky, the Hawaldar said, "That is another *sala*, go and catch him. He shall carry a burden." Then a sepoy went to catch him. The sepoy was going for him, but he stood still and did not move a limb. The sepoy caught him ; still he said nothing. He was then brought before the Hawaldar ; still he remained quiet. A sepoy put a load on his head and he took it. The Hawaldar then turned back and walked with the cart. Suddenly there was heard the report of a pistol shot ; the hawaldar was shot through the head and fell dead on the spot. A sepoy caught the kit-bearer's hand, saying, "this man has killed the Hawaldar" :—he had still the pistol in his hand. He threw away his load and struck the sepoy with the pistol and broke his head, and then the fellow desisted. Just then two hundred armed men came out of the woods and surrounded the sepoys. The sepoys were then awaiting their captain, who, thinking that robbers were on them, rode up to the carts and gave orders to form a square ;—the Englishman comes round to his senses at the time of peril. The sepoys instantly formed a square facing all sides ; at the second order from him they raised their guns. At this time somebody tore away the captain's sword from his waist and with one blow cut down his head. When the *saheb* fell down head-less from his horse, the order to fire could no more be given. Every one's eyes ther fell

on a man who stood on the cart, sword in hand, and cried 'Hari, Hari' and shouted "Kill the sepoys, kill the sepoys." It was Bhavananda.

When they saw their captain's head suddenly chopped off and got no orders from any one, the sepoys stood still for some time in fear and stupor. In the meantime, the fiery robbers killed and wounded many of them, approached the cart and took possession of the treasure-boxes. The sepoys were demoralised and fled defeated.

Then the man who had stood on the mound and had later on taken the lead in the fight approached Bhavananda. After they had embraced each other, Bhavananda said, "Brother Jivananda, well did you enter our order." Jivananda said "Bhavananda, be your name glorified!"

Jivananda grew busy in carrying the booty to the proper place and soon left the place with his followers. Bhavananda stood there alone.

Chapter IX

Mahendra had got down from the cart, snatched his arms from a sepoy and was ready to fight. But he shortly knew that these people were robbers and had attacked the sepoys to plunder the treasure. So thinking, he drew off and stood apart from the field of fight. For, he thought, he would share the glamour of their misdeeds if he aided these miscreants. He then threw down the sword and began slowly to walk away, when Bhavananda came and stood by him.

Mahendra asked, "Sir, who are you?"

"What's the use of your knowing it," retorted Bhavananda.

"I have some use ;—I have been placed under a very deep obligation to you today."

"I did not see you felt like it. Sword in hand, you stood apart. You are a Zemindar's son, deft enough in devouring milk and butter, but no good for any strenuous work.

He had scarcely finished when Mahendra retorted with scorn : "But it was a wicked deed—it was robbery."

"Be it so," returned Bhavananda, "We have done you some good and wish to do some more. You might as well try to require."

M. You have done me some good, no doubt ; but what more good can you do? And really it's better to go without any obligation than to be obliged to a robber.

Bh. You may accept or refuse our aid as you like. You may come with me if you choose. I might take you to meet your wife and child."

Mahendra turned round and said, "What do you say?"

Bhavananda returned no answer but walked away. Mahendra had no option but to follow him, wondering as he went what sort of outlaws these might be.

Chapter X

In that smiling moonlit night, the two silently walked across the plain. Mahendra was silent, sad, careless and a little curious.

Bhavananda suddenly changed his looks. He was no more the steady and mild anchorite, nor wore any more the warlike hero's face—the face of the slayer of a captain of forces. Not even was there in his mien the proud disdain with which he had scolded Mahendra even now. It seemed as if his heart was filled with joy at the beauteous sight of the earth, lulled in peace and beaming under the silvery moon, and of the glory in her wilds and woods and hills and streams, and grew cheery like the ocean smiling with the rise of the moon. Bhavananda grew chatty, cheerful, cordial and very eager to talk. He made many an attempt to open a conversation with his companion but Mahendra would not speak. Having no option left, he then began to sing to himself :

Hail thee mother ! To her I bow,
Who with sweetest water o'erflows
With dainty fruits is rich endowed
And cooling whom the south wind blows,
Who's green with crops as on her grow ;
To such a mother down I bow.

Mahendra was a little puzzled to hear the song ; he could not grasp anything. Who could be the mother, he thought.

" Who with sweetest water o'erflows,
With dainty fruits is rich endowed
And cooling whom the south wind blows ?
Who's green with crops as on her grow .

He asked, "Who is the mother?" Bhavananda did not answer but sang on :

With silver moonbeams smile her nights
 And trees that in their bloom abound
 Adorn her ; and her face doth beam
 With sweetest smiles ; sweet's her sound !
 Joy and bliss she doth bestow ;
 To such a mother down I bow.

"It is the country and no mortal mother"—cried Mahendra. "We own no other mother," retorted Bhavananda ; "they say, 'the mother and the land of birth are higher than heaven.' We think the land of birth to be no other than our mother herself. We have no mother, no father, no brother, no wife, no child, no hearth or home, we have only got the mother

Who with sweetest water o'erflows
 With dainty fruits is rich endowed.

Mahendra now understood the song and asked Bhavananda to sing again.

He sang :

Hail thee mother ! To her I bow,
 Who with sweetest water o'erflows
 With dainty fruits is rich and endowed
 And cooling whom the south wind blows ;
 Who's green with crops as on her grow ;
 To such a mother down I bow !

With silver moon beams smile her nights
 And trees that in their bloom abound
 Adorn her ; and her face doth beam
 With sweetest smiles, sweet's her sound !
 Joy and bliss she doth bestow ;
 To such a mother down I bow.

Resounding with triumphal shouts
 From seventy million voices bold

With devotion served by twice
 As many hands that ably hold
 The sharp and shining rapier bold,
 --Thou a weakling we are told !*

Proud in strength and prowess thou art,
 Redeemer of thy children thou ;
 Chastiser of aggressive foes ;
 Mother, to thee thy child I bow.

Thou art knowledge, thou my faith,
 Thou my heart and thou my mind.
 Nay more, thou art the vital air
 That moves my body from behind.

Of my hands thou art the strength,
 At my heart devotion thou,
 In each temple and each shrine,
 To thy image it is we bow.

Durga bold who yields her arms
 With half a score of hands,
 The science-goddess, Vani too,
 And Lakshmi who on lotus stands,—
 What are they but, mother, thou,
 To thee in all these forms I bow !

To thee ! Fortune-giver, that art
 To fault unknown, beyond compare,
 Who dost with sweetest waters flow
 And on thy children in thy care
 Dainty fruits dost rich bestow,
 To thee, mother, to thee I bow !

To thee I bow, that art so green
 And so rich bedecked ; with smile
 Thy face doth glow ; thou dost sustain
 And hold us—still unknown to guile !
 Hail thee mother ! To thee I bow !

Mahendra saw that the outlaw was weeping as he sang.
 He then asked in wonder " Who may you be, please ? "

* Another reading would give " why art thou so weak with so much strength ? "

Bhavananda answered, "We are *The Children*."

"Children ! Whose children are you ?"

"Our mother's."

"Well, but does a child worship its mother with the proceeds of robbery ?"

"We do nothing of the sort."

"Presently you looted a cart."

"Was that robbery ? Whom did we rob ?"

"Why, of course the king !"

"The King ! What right has he to take this money ?"

"It is the royal portion which goes to the king."

"How do you call him a king who does not rule his kingdom ?"

"I fear you will be blown up before the sepoy's cannons one of these days."

"We have seen plenty of sepoys ; even to-day we have had some."

"You haven't yet known them aright, you will know them one day however."

"What then ? One never dies more than once."

"But why should you willingly invite death ?"

"Mahendra Sinha, I thought you to be a man amongst men, but I now see there is little to choose between you and the rest of your lot ;—you are only the sworn consumer of milk and butter. Just think of the snake. It creeps on the ground ; I cannot think of any creature lower and meaner than it ; but put your foot on its neck and it will spread its fangs to bite you. But can nothing disturb *your* equanimity ? Look round and see,

look at Magadha, Mithila, Kasi, Kanchi, Delhi, Kashmir,—where do you find such misery as here. Where else do the people eat grass for want of better food ? Where do they eat thorns and white-ants' earth and wild creepers ? Where do men think of eating dogs and jackals and even carcasses ? Where else can you find men getting so anxious about the money in their coffers, the *salgram* in their temples, the females in the Zenana, and the child in the mother's womb ? Yes, here they even rip open the womb ! In every country the bond that binds a sovereign to his subjects is the protection that he gives ; but our Mussalman King—how does he protect us ? Our religion is gone ; so is our caste, our honour and the sacredness of our family even ! Our lives even are now to be sacrificed. Unless we drive these tipsy long-beards away, a Hindu can no longer hope to save his religion.”

“ Well, but how can you drive them away ? ”

“ We will beat them.”

“ Alone, will you ? With a slap, I presume.”

The outlaw sang :

“ Resounding with triumphal shouts
 From seventy million voices bold,
 With devotion served by twice
 As many hands that ably hold
 The sharp and shining rapier bold,
 —Thou a weakling we are told !

M. “ But I see you are alone.”

Bh. “ Why, only now you saw two hundred of us.”

M. “ Are they all *Children* ? ”

Bh. "They are, all of them."

"How many more are there?"

"Thousands of them ; we will have more by and by."

"Suppose you get ten or twenty thousands. Could you hope to depose the Mussulman king with them?"

"How many soldiers had the English at Plassey."

"Tut ! to compare the English with the Bengali!"

"Why not? Physical strength does not count for much ; the bullet won't be running faster, I ween, if I am stronger."

"Then why this great difference between the English and the Mussalman?"

"Because an Englishman would die sooner than fly ;—the Mussulman will fly with the first breath of fire and look about for *sherbet*. Secondly, the English have determination : what they want to do they will see done. The Mussulman soldiers come to die for pay, and even that they don't always get. Lastly there is courage. A cannon ball falls only on one spot and cannot kill two hundred men together. Yet, when such a ball falls before the Mussulmans, they fly away in a body, while no Englishman would even fly before a shower of balls."

"Have you these qualities?"

"No, but you dont pluck them like ripe fruits from trees ; they come by practice."

"What is your practice?"

"Don't you see we are all anchorites? Our renunciation is for the sake of this practice alone. When our mission is done or the practice is completed, we

shall go back to our homes. We too have wives and children."

" You have left them all? How could you break the ties of family life?"

" A *Child* must not lie! I will not brag in vain to you. No body can ever cut the bond. He who says that he never cares for the family bonds either did never love or merely brags. We don't get rid of the bonds but simply keep our pledge. Will you enter our order?"

" Till I hear of my wife and child, I can say nothing."

" Come and you will see them."

So saying they began to walk along. Bhavananda sang the song 'Hail Mother' again. Mahendra had a good voice and had some proficiency in music which he loved; so he joined Bhabananda in his song.—He found that it really brought tears to the eye. " If I have not got to renounce my wife and daughter," said he " you may initiate me into your order."

" He who takes this vow," said Bhavananda, " has to give up his wife and children. If you take it, you need not see your wife and daughter. They will be well kept, but till the mission is fulfilled, you are not to see their face."

" I don't care to take your vow," blurted out Mahendra

Chapter XI

The next day dawned. The desolate woods, so long dark and still, resounded gleefully with the joyous notes of birds. In that blissful morn and in that happy wood, Satyananda was sitting on his deer-skin seat in the Abbey of Bliss for saying his morning prayer. Near him sat Jivananda. At this time Bhavananda came there with Mahendra. The monk silently went on with his worship and no one ventured to speak. When his prayers were done, Bhavananda and Jivananda both saluted him and took the dust of his feet before humbly taking their seats. Satyananda then beckoned to Bhavananda and took him out. We do not know what they talked about, but they shortly came back and the monk feelingly spoke to Mahendra with a smiling face : "My child, I am very much distressed at your troubles. By the grace of the Lord alone could I save your wife and child last night." He then told him the story of Kalyani's rescue and said, "Come, I will take you where they are." So saying the monk led the way and Mahendra followed him into the temple. On entering it he found it to be a very high and spacious chamber. Even in the glorious morn smiling with the infant sun, when the woods were glistening as if decked with diamonds, this vast room was very dark. Mahendra could not at first see what there was in the room, but gazing and gazing on, he presently found a huge four-handed image, bearing

in its four hands, the Conch, the Disc, the Club and the Lotus ; the Kaustubha shining in its breast and the *Sudarsan Chakra* before it looking as if it turned.* Two huge decapitated forms stood before it, painted as if drenched in blood, representing Madhu and Kaitabha.† To the left stood Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, as though shaking with fear, with her ample locks flowing at ease and a garland of lilies on. To the right was Saraswati, the goddess of learning, surrounded with books and instruments of music and embodied symphonies. On the lap of Vishnu sat a charming figure, fairer far than Lakshmi or Saraswati and richer far than both. Super-human beings like the *Gandharvas*, *Kinnaras*, *Yakshas*, and *Rakshas* were engaged in worshipping her.

The ascetic asked Mahendra in a deep and resounding tone if he saw everything there.

"Yes" answered Mahendra.

"Have you seen what is there on Vishnu's lap?"

"Aye, but who is she?"

"The Mother."

"Who is the Mother?"

"She whose children we are."

"Who is she?"

* This is the form in which Vishnu, the Lord of Preservation, is conceived in Hindu Mythology. The *Sudarsana Chakra* is the mythical disc which Vishnu holds in his hand and with which he slays his foes.

† Two of the Demons killed by Vishnu to lighten the burden of the world.

"You will know by and by ; now say, 'Hail Mother' and come to see more."

Then the ascetic led Mahendra to another chamber where he found a complete image of Jagaddhatri, perfect and luxuriously decorated.

Mahendra asked, "Who is this ?"

"The Mother," said the celebate, "as she *was*."

"What do you mean by that ?"

"In the past, she trampled under her feet the lion, the tusker and other beasts, and built her own beauteous palace over their homes. She was adorned in a full suit of ornaments and was ever smiling and fair. She was like the young sun of the morning and is here painted in its hue. Make your obeisance to her."

After Mahendra had bowed before the image of his mother-country which stood in the shape of the protectress of the world, the anchorite showed him a narrow tunnel and bade him come by it. He himself went before and Mahendra followed him apprehensively to a dark underground chamber where a streak of light had straggled in somehow. In that dim light he saw the figure of Kali.

The celebate observed, "Look what the mother has *now* become." Mahendra cried with horror, "Oh, Kali !"

"Yes, Kali, covered with the blackest gloom, despoiled of all wealth, and without a cloth to wear. The whole of the country is a land of death and so the Mother has no better ornament than a garland of skulls. Her

own Good she cruelly tramples under her foot !* Alas, Mother ! ”

Tears rolled down the cheeks of the monk. Mahendra asked,

“ Why are there arms in her hand ? ”

“ We are her *children*; we have only just given her the arms. Say, ‘ Hail, Mother.’ ” Mahendra said “ Hail Mother ” and made his bow to Kali. Then the monk showed him the way through another tunnel, bid Mahendra follow him, and himself began to climb up. Suddenly the rays of the morning sun flashed before their eyes and sweet warblers poured forth their delicious songs. In a large marble temple to which the alley led, Mahendra saw a golden image of the ten-handed goddess smiling brightly in the morning sun.

Bowing to this goddess, the monk observed : “ This is the mother as she *would be* :—her ten hands spreading on all sides and her varied powers appearing in them in the form of so many arms;—the enemy trampled under her feet and the lion at her feet engaged in killing her foes. Her hands,” he said, and tears rose to his eyes,—“ point to all sides; the wielder of many arms and chastiser of her foes she stands—with luck-giving Lakshmi to her right and Vani, the spring of knowledge and science, to her left. With her stand Kartik, the

* This is the form in which the goddess Kali is represented in Hindu mythology. The form of Siva under Kali’s feet the author takes to be an allegorical representation of ‘ Good,’ for Siva means ‘ good.’ It should be borne in mind that these allegorical explanations are the author’s own and not sanctioned by mythology.

emblem of strength, and Ganesa, the god of success. Come, let us join in saluting her." So saying, they joined their palms and looking upwards sang in harmony :—

*Sarva-mangal-mangalye sive sarvartha-sad hikे saranye, tryambake gouri narayani namostute.** They both bowed with deepest reverence, and when they rose, Mahendra inquired with a choking voice : "When shall we look at this form of the mother ?" "When," said the monk, "all the children of the mother learn to call her so, then will she be propitiated."

Mahendra abruptly asked, "Where are my wife and daughter ?"

"Come and you will see them."

"Yes, I will see them but once, and then bid them adieu."

"Why ?"

M. "I want to take your noble vow."

"Where would you send them," asked the monk.

Mahendra mused and then said, "There is nobody in my house, I have no other place of refuge. And, in truth, where else would I find an asylum in these dire days ?"

"Go out of the temple by the way you came by.

* This is the prescribed form of invocation of the deity here represented. The form of the goddess here represented is called Rajrajeswari or simply Durga and is the form in which the goddess is worshipped in September—October by the Hindus of Bengal. Like the forms referred to above, this one also is a form of the goddess of Power (Sakti) in Hindu mythology. The new meaning read into it is, of course, the author's own.

At the door you will find your wife and daughter. Kalyani has not yet taken any food. You will find food where they are sitting. Give her some and then take what you like yourself; now you will not meet any of us. If your mind, however, remains unchanged, I shall come to you in proper time."

Then suddenly the monk vanished by some strange passage. Coming out by the way shown to him, Mahendra saw Kalyani seated with her daughter within the pavilion on the yard.

Satyananda on the other hand got down to a secluded underground chamber by another tunnel. There Jivananda and Bhavananda were counting money and arranging the coins in rows. There lay in that room heaps of gold, silver and copper and shining diamonds, pearls and coral. Bhavananda and Jivananda were putting the booty of last night in order.

On entering the room, Satyananda said, "Jivananda, Mahendra will come to us. It will be very useful to us if he does, for then the hoarded wealth of generations of his ancestors will be put to the service of the Mother. But do not take him in till he is entirely and sincerely devoted to the Mother. When your work is done, do follow him at different times ; and when you see him fit, bring him to the temple of Sri Vishnu. And, by all means, save their lives, no matter when or how. For like the chastising of the wicked, the protection of the good too is a part of the *The Children's mission*.

Chapter XII

Bitter in all conscience had been their trials ere they met—of both Kalyani and Mahendra. Kalyani was borne down with her grief as she wept. Mahendra wept more bitterly still. This done, they set themselves to wiping their eyes. As often as they wiped them, however, tears would roll anew down their cheeks. To stop the flow, Kalyani sought other topics and spoke of taking something. She asked her husband to take the food the celebate's man had left there. It was not rice and curry, for you could not think of them at that time, when famine was raging. Such things as were in the land, however, the *Children* could easily get. At that time hungry people would eat up every blessed fruit that there might be on the trees ; but this part of the wood was not accessible to common people and its fruits were, therefore, secure from their grasp. The ascetic's man could, therefore, secure for them plenty of fruits and some milk ; for, quite a number of cows formed part of the property of these monks. At Kalyani's request, Mahendra first ate something and then she partook of some of the remains of his dish in private. Of the milk, she gave some to her daughter and laid by the rest, to give her hereafter. They then slept to soothe their fatigue. On waking up they began to deliberate where to go. Kalyani said : ‘We found our home unsafe and left it. Now we find it is worse

out of it. Let us then go back home again." Mahendra too desired it. He wished to leave her at home in charge of some worthy guardian and himself take the glorious and heavenly vow of service to motherland. He, therefore, easily agreed. Having shaken off their fatigue by that time, they took up their daughter and started for Padachinha.

But what path they were to take in going to that place they could not make out in the depth of that impenetrable wood. They thought they would find a way only if they could get out of the wood, but out of the wood they could not find the way to go. They groped about for a very long time and after going round and round came to the abbey again ;—the way out they could not find. Before them stood a monk smiling, dressed in the Vaishnava's garb, who was not known to them. Mahendra was offended. "Why do, smile, Gossain ?" he asked. "How" he retorted, "could you get into the wood ?" "Anyhow we *have* come in ! What's that to you ?" "Why can't you then go out," the monk asked and began to smile again.

" You are making :a fun of it," said Mahendra in anger ; " but could you go out yourself ?"

" Come with me," said the Vaishnava, " I'll show you the way out. You must have come in with one of our monks. No one else knows the way to the place or out of it."

At this Mahendra enquired, "Are you a *Child*?"

" Yes, I am," he answered, " Come with me. I am here only to show you the way."

"Your name, please?" asked Mahendra.

"Dhirananda Goswami," said the Vaishnava and led the way, Mahendra and Kalyani following. Dhirananda took them out of the forest by a very hard passage and himself turned back into the forest.

Out of the forest there stretched forth a plain with trees here and there. The highway ran close by the wood with this plain on its other side. At one place a small stream flowed in murmurs through the wood. The water in it was very clear but black like a very dark cloud. Beauteous green trees upon its banks shadowed the stream and birds of all sorts were singing their various melodies upon them. The music of their songs mingled with the sweet murmur of the stream. So too mingled the shadow of the tree with the water's sombre hue, and, methinks, Kalyani's brooding mind too mingled with their gloom in sympathy. She sat under a tree by the river and asked her husband to sit by her. He did so and Kalyani took her child from his arms. She took up her husband's hand in hers and sat in silence for a while. Then she asked, "I see you very sad today. Our danger seems to be over now; why then this gloom?"

Mahendra sighed. "I am no longer mine," said he, "I do not know what to do."

"Why," asked she.

"I shall tell you what happened after I lost you." So saying Mahendra recounted the story at length.

"I too have suffered," said Kalyani, "great distress and encountered great dangers. It will be no good

to you to learn what I have suffered. I do not know how I could sleep in the agony in which I was ; but I did fall asleep towards the end of last night. I then dreamed that I had gone, by what virtue I do not know, to a strange place. There was no earth there. It was all light, sweet and cool light like the streaks let down through a break in the clouds. There was no man there, but living forms beaming with light ; no sound, but a low melody like the echoes of a sweet distant music. A fragrance was there like that of myriads of flowers—*mallika, malati, gandharaj*, all blooming and ever fresh. In a place above all there sat one who shone as though a blue hill was slowly burning and glowing from within. A large fiery crown-jewel was on his head. He had four hands. On his two sides there were what I could not well see—perhaps female figures ; but such was their glow and such their fragrance that I fainted to look at them and could not see who they were. Before the four-handed form stood a female—also glorious, but shaded by clouds dimming her glory. You could faintly see that she was a lean but beautiful suffering woman and that she was weeping. A balmy and fragrant breeze seemed to waft me on its waves to the feet of the four-handed figure. The clouded lean woman pointed to me and said, 'This is she ; it is for her that Mahendra does not come to me.' Then a very clear and melodious note like that of a lute sounded, and the four-handed figure said to me : 'Leave your husband and come to me. This is the mother of you all, your

husband will serve her. If you stay with him she will not be served. So come away.' I wept and said I could not leave my husband. Again the answer rang out in the melody of a lute : 'I am the husband, I the mother, I the father, I the son and I the daughter ; come to me.' I do not recollect what I said, but then I awoke !' So saying she stopped and remained silent.

Mahendra was quite overcome with amazement and fear. The *Doyel* rang her melody overhead, the *Papiya* flooded the skies with her music, and the cuckoo rang the quarters to the echo ; the *Bhringaraj* shook the woods with her sharp and clear song ; the rivulet murmured softly at their feet ; the wind wafted the odours of wild flowers. Here and there the sun danced and glistened in the ripples and waved by the gentle wind, the palm-leaves made a cracking sound at times. The blue hills were ranged at a distance. In their emotion the pair sat mute for a while. After a very long time Kalyani asked again : "What are you musing about ?"

"I was thinking what to do," said he : "dreams are but scares, they grow in the mind and melt in it. They are the shadows of life. Come, let us go home."

Kalyani said, "Do go where the gods want you to go" and handed over the girl to him.

Mahendra took up the daughter and asked : "And you ? Where would you go ?"

Kalyani covered her eyes with her hands, pressed her forehead with her fingers and said : "I too shall go where the god has asked me to go." Mahendra started

up. "Where? How could you go," he cried. Kalyani showed him the pill-box of poison.

Mahendra was amazed and said "what, you'll take poison?" "I thought I would" she slowly said, "but"—she stopped and mused in silence. Mahendra looked to her in anxious suspense—a moment then seemed to be an age. Seeing that Kalyani did not finish her sentence, he asked her as to what she was going to say. "I thought I'd take it," repeated she, "but I have no mind even to go to Baikuntha leaving you and Sukumari behind. I can not die."

So saying Kalyani put the poison on the ground, and they began to talk of their past and their future. Gradually they became quite absorbed in their talk and got abstracted. In the meantime the girl took up the poison box in her hand unobserved.

Sukumari thought it was quite a nice plaything. Holding it in her left hand she clapped it well with her right. Then she took it in her right hand and clapped it well with her left and then began to pull it with both hands. The pill-box thus flew open and the pill rolled down.

Sukumari saw the little pill fall on her father's cloth and fancied it was another toy to play with. She threw away the box and picked up the pill.

It is strange Sukumari did not put the pill-box into her mouth, but in respect of the pill she did not make the slightest delay in doing so. "So soon as you get it, eat it" says the adage, and she instantly put the ball

into her mouth. Just then her mother turned her eyes upon the child.

"Alack a day," said the mother, "what has she taken?" She promptly thrust her finger into the mouth of the child. It was then that they saw the pill-box lying empty. Sukumari thought it quite a jolly game ; she pressed her teeth—she had only a few of them and smiled at her mother. But perhaps the taste of the poison began to disagree with her ; so she presently loosened her teeth and Kalyani threw away the pill from the mouth. The girl began to weep.

The pill remained on the ground. Kalyani soaked her skirt in the stream, washed her daughter's face with water and anxiously asked Mahendra if anything had gone down her stomach.

Under such circumstances it is the worst that comes uppermost in the mind of parents. Where there is love there is always fear. Mahendra had never seen before how big the pill was, but he took it up, gazed at it for some time and said, "Most likely she has swallowed a great deal."

Kalyani easily believed that. She too took the pill and examined it. In the meantime the girl became slightly out of sorts for the little that she had swallowed. She began to fidget and cry and grew very weak in the end. Kalyani then told Mahendra : "There is nothing more to be done now ; Sukumari has gone the way the gods have pointed, I too must follow." So saying Kalyani threw the pill into her mouth and instantly swallowed it.

Mahendra cried out in agony : "Kalyani, dearest, what hast thou done?"

Kalyani made no answer but took the dust of her husband's feet and said : "My Lord, words will beget more words and cause delay ; let me now part."

"Kalyani, Kalyani ! What hast thou done ?" cried Mahendra and rang the skies with lamentations. Softly she answered, "I've done well, for you may not neglect the work of the gods for the sake of a woman. I was about to disobey the gods, and see, I have lost my daughter. Who knows you would not go too if I disobeyed further ?"

"I could have left you somewhere," cried Mahendra, weeping bitterly, "and when the work was done I might have been happy again in your company. Kalyani, my dearest, why did you do this ? The hand with which I would have wielded the sword you have cut down. What am I without you ?"

"Where could you take me ?" she answered. "Where is there a place for me ? My parents and friends have all died in the dire famine. Who else has got a place for me ? Where have I a place to go to ? Where could you take me ? I am your stumbling block. It is well that I die. Bless me that I may meet you again in that glorious region of my dreams." So saying Kalyani took the dust of his feet again. Mahendra wept and could make no reply. Kalyani spoke again—her voice was very soft, very sweet and very loving—"Who is there that can undo the will of the gods," she asked, "the gods

have asked me to go, could I have stayed if I would ? No, somehow I must have died. It is well, therefore, that I die now. The vow that you have taken, fulfil it with all your heart ; you will acquire spiritual merit. With that I may go to Heaven, and we two shall enjoy Heaven for eternity."

Now the girl recovered herself by vomiting, for the quantity of the drug that she had taken was very small. But for that Mahendra had not much attention to spare. He put the girl in her mother's lap, held them in a warm embrace and wept incessantly. At that time there rose from the woods a soft but solemn voice singing the names of the god Vishnu in his character as chastiser of wrong-doers.

The poison had began to act and Kalyani's consciousness was slowly subsiding. She seemed to hear the melodious voice that had greeted her ears in Baikuntha in the dream she had. What a song and what a voice ! She began to sing herself.

Kalyani now asked Mahendra to join. Mahendra too was moved by music that came from the woods and the sweet melody of Kalyani's voice. He felt too that the gods alone could help him and so he joined in their song.

The music then rang from all sides. It seemed as if the very birds had caught the refrain of their song and the murmuring stream was echoing in sympathy.

Mahendra forgot his grief and sang in ecstacy, joining his voice with Kalyani's. It seemed as if the woods

also sang with the same music in symphony. Kalyani's voice grew fainter and fainter, but still she sang on.

By and by her voice grew still. Words could not come out from her mouth, her eyes were shut and her body grew cold—Mahendra knew she had departed for Baikuntha, with the name of the Lord on her lips. Then, frantic with grief, he rang the woods and made the birds start in their nests with his wild song.

At that time, some one came and held him in deep embrace ; and before the body of her who was on the way to eternity, the two sang—inspired by the glory of the Eternal Himself—His glorious name. Birds and beasts were still, and the world was flooded with beauty—it seemed a very tabernacle for glorifying the name of the Lord. Satyananda sat down there with Mahendra in his lap.

Chapter XIII

In the meantime there was a feeling of unrest in the streets of the capital. The report had got abroad that the sannyasis had looted the money which was being sent from the royal treasury to Calcutta. A royal mandate was issued and sepoys and footmen were all scouring the country in quest of ascetics. Now, in that famine-stricken land there was scarcely a genuine ascetic at the time. For the ascetics lived on charity and the people were in no hurry to give them alms by starving themselves. So all true sannyasis had repaired to such Holy Cities as Benares and Allahabad. Only the *Children* used to don the ascetic's robes when they chose, and put them away when necessary. Seeing trouble ahead, most of them had left their saffron robes, and the famished troops of the king, unable to catch hold of a single sannyasi, broke into private dwelling-houses, scratched a wretched meal out of the empty kitchen-utensils which they smashed to pieces and retired. Satyananda alone never left this saffron robe.*

Just at the time when Mahendra and Satyananda, locked in deep embrace, were praying to God with tears in their eyes, on the bank of the dark murmuring stream and beside the highway where Kalyani lay in death, Nazaraddi Jamadar put in his appearance at the

* This is one of the Homeric nods of our author, for when we meet him first, Satyananda, the reader will see, wore "a milk-white garb."

place with a *posse* of sepoy. Without the slightest hesitation he put his hand on Satyananda's neck and cried out : "This rogue is a sannyasi." Another caught Mahendra at the same time; for, in sooth, as his associate he must also be a sannyasi himself. Another again was making for Kalyani's body which was stretched on the grass; but he found that it was the corpse of a female and might not be a sannyasi for aught he knew—and left her. He left the child too, thinking likewise. Without another word they then bound up the two and prepared to carry them away,—Kalyani's body and her daughter lay there under a tree without any body to take care of them.

Mahendra was first stupefied with grief and only half-conscious in his ecstasy. He could not quite understand what was going on and did not object to being tied up. But as he went a few steps, he suddenly realised that they had been taken prisoners. No sooner did the thought strike him that Kalyani's body lay there uncremated, that his child was left behind uncared for, and that they might now be eaten up by beasts of prey, than he threw asunder his hands and the knot was snapped at a pull. Kicking the Jamadar down to the ground in an instant he threw himself upon a sepoy. The other three seploys then rushed on him and worsted and imprisoned him again. Weighed down with sorrow, he said to Satyananda : "If you had but helped me a bit we could have killed all the five miscreants."

"What strength is there left to my old arms?" said Satyananda. "I have no power other than He whom I was calling. Do not try to oppose the inevitable. We could not beat down these five. Let us rather see where they take us—God will look to everything."

They then followed the sepoys without making any further attempt to get free. After they had gone some way, Satyananda said to the sepoys : "My friends, I am in the habit of chanting *Harinam*—Is there any objection to my doing so now?" The Jamadar thought the monk was a good fellow ; so he said, "You may chant the name of your Lord, I won't object. You are an old monk and I think you will be, very likely, released ; but this wretch, no doubt, will be hanged. "Then the Brahmachari sang in a low tone :

"In the wood beside the stream
Fanned by zephyr mild
Lies a beauty ; haste thee, hero,
Weeping, is Sukumari wild"—*

On reaching the town they were taken to the Kotwal. He sent information to the headquarters and kept them in confinement in the meantime. The lock-up where they were kept was dismal, for, who went into it scarcely came out again, there being nobody to administer justice. It was not the gaol of the English Government, for the day of the English rule had not yet come.

* This is a clever adaptation of one of the beautiful couplets of the *Gita-govinda* of Jayadeva. There the verse refers to Krishna sitting in the grove beside the Jamuna and urging Radha to hasten there.

Now is the reign of law and order—those were the days of anarchy and misrule. You can not compare the days of order with days when law and order were flouted.

Chapter XIV

It was night. Confined within the cell, Satyananda said to Mohendra : "what a happy day is this ! for, we have been imprisoned. Say "Hari Murari."

"Hari Murari" said Mahendra in a fainting voice.

"Why do you seem to be so crest-fallen, friend," asked Satyananda to Mahendra. "On taking the vow you would have no option but to renounce your wife and child ; no relation with them would have subsisted ; why grieve then now ?"

"To renounce is one thing," said Mahendra, "to be parted by death is quite another. The power which would have strengthened my nerves in taking the vow has now left me with my wife and child."

"Strength you will have," said Satyananda, "I will give it to you. Be initiated in the great doctrine and take up our noble mission."

Mahendra was disgusted. "My wife and daughter," he said, "are the food of dogs and jackals and you are speaking to me now of vows and missions."

"Be easy on that score" said Satyananda, "the Children must have duly cremated your wife and taken your daughter to a safe asylum."

Mahendra was surprised to hear this ; he did not quite believe it. "How could you know ?" he asked, "you have all along been with me." "We are initiated," said Satyananda, "in a noble vow ; the gods do favour

us. You will know this even to-night, and to-night you shall be free."

Mahendra did not speak. Satyananda felt that he doubted him and said : " You do not seem to believe me, you may try what I say." He then went up to the door. Mahendra did not see in the dark what he did ; but he knew that he talked to somebody.

When he returned Mahendra asked : " How may I try it ? "

" You will be free even now," said Satyananda. And as he said this, the prison door flew open and a man entered the cell.

" Who is Mahendra Singha," he enquired. " It is me," said Mahendra. " You have been ordered to be set free," said the man, " you may go."

Mahendra was astonished ; and then thought it to be a hoax. But he meant to see what it was, and he walked out. No one stopped him and he went up to the highway.

In the meantime the man said to Satyananda : " My liege, why do you not go too ? It is for you that I have come."

" Who are you ? " inquired Satyananda. " Are you Dhirananda Gossain ? "

Dh. Yes, sire.

S. How could you come to be a warder here ?

D. Bhabananda sent me out. Coming to the town I heard that you were in the cell and got some hemp mixed with Datura. The Khan Saheb who was mounting

guard on you is just now lying flat on the ground under the influence of the drug. The uniform and the spear that I have donned are his.

S. You just walk out of the town in that dress. I will not go in this way.

D. Why, how is it ?

S. To-day will the *Children* be tried.

At that moment Mahendra came back.

"Why have you come back," asked Satyananda.

"You must be a man of miraculous powers," said Mahendra ; "I wont leave your company."

"Then stay," said Satyananda, "we will both be released tonight."

Dhirananda went out. Satyananda and Mahendra stayed in the cell.

Chapter XV

Many people had heard Satyananda's song and among them was Jivananda. The reader may remember that he had orders to follow and watch Mahendra. In so doing he met a woman on the way who had not had food for seven days and lay on the road side. Jivananda had to wait for sometime to revive her. Having done so, he was coming after his errand calling the woman all sorts of names, for, sooth, it was she that delayed him. Now he saw his master being taken captive by the Mussulmans and heard him singing as he went. Jivananda understood all signs of the master.

"In the wood beside the stream, fanned by zephyr mild, lies a beauty" so sang the master. "Now, here's fine business—another starving wench lying on the river side, I trow," thought Jivananda and walked along the bank. He had seen the master being himself taken away by the Mussulmans and, of course, his first work would be to deliver him.

But he saw that this sign did not mean that ; and the first lesson he had from him was that obeying him was greater than saving his life. He would, therefore, perform his command, he decided.

Jivananda walked along the river side, and on the way found a female body and a living child under a tree. Jivananda had never seen Mahendra's wife and child, but he thought these might be his, for he had seen

Mahendra in the company of his master. Now, the mother was dead but the daughter was alive ; so to save her was the first consideration for else she might be killed by beasts of prey.

"Bhavananda Thakur must be somewhere here, and he will cremate the woman" thought Jivananda, and went away with the girl in his arms.

With the girl in his arms Jivananda entered the dense forest and crossing it came to a small village.

Its name was Bhairavipur but people called it Bhaarupur. There lived in this village a few humble men.

There was no big village near about and beyond the village was the jungle again—it was in fact a little village surrounded by jungles all round ; but it was very beautiful.

There were big pasture lands covered over with soft grass. There were gardens containing mango, jack, jambolan and palm trees with soft green leaves and a blue and limpid tank within. In the water there was the crane, the duck and the gallinule ; ashore there were the cuckoo and the noisy goose ; at some distance the peacock screamed at intervals ; in each house there was a cow in the yard and an empty granary ; but there was no paddy anywhere in those dark days. One had a *Myna* in a cage, there was painting on another's wall, and a herbarium in another's yard. All were famine-stricken, weak, lean and miserable. Still the men of this village showed signs of well-being ;—there were various kinds of fruits growing in the forest ; and with these

the villagers had managed to keep body and soul together.

Within a mango grove stood a little house. It was made up of four huts surrounded by a mud wall. The owner of the house had a cow, a goat, a peacock, a *myna* and a parrot. He had had a monkey too, but had let it off as he could feed it no longer. He had a husking mill, a granary and a lemon tree in the yard, with some *malika* and *jasmine* trees which had no flowers this year. On the veranda of each hut stood a spinning wheel. There were not many people in the house however. This was the house Jivananda entered with the child.

On entering the house Jivananda began to make a horrid noise with a spinning wheel. The little girl had never in her life heard such noise. She was weeping since she had left her mother, and now began to cry lustily. Then a girl of seventeen or eighteen summers came out of the room and putting the forefinger of her right hand on her cheek she bent her head and stood watching in wonder ; "La ! it's your brother ! why, what are you working the wheel for ? Where could you get the girl ? Is it yours ? Have you got one ? Have you married again ?" she asked mischievously.

Jivananda threw the child into her arms, showed her his fist, and said : "You wicked wench, how dare you speak of my daughter. Am I a man to trifle with ? Now go and see if you have got milk in the house."

The girl answered : "Yes, I have ; would you take some ?" "Yes," replied Jivananda most seriously.

Then the girl forthwith went to warm some milk and Jivananda found congenial occupation in turning the spinning-wheel awhile. The child, since it came to the young woman, never thought of crying. We don't know what it thought—perhaps it took the girl for its mother, finding her as lovely as a lotus in full bloom. But perhaps the flame had slightly seared her and she cried once. On hearing it Jivananda shouted out : "O Nimi, you wicked wench ; what are you about? Haven't finished warming the milk yet ?"

"Yes, brother," answered Nimi, "I have finished," and she poured the milk in a stone cup and brought it to Jivananda.

Jivananda pretended to be mightily angry and said : "I have half a mind to throw this hot milk in your face. You think I should be drinking the milk, Eh ?"

"Who'll take it then ?," asked Nimi.

"Don't you see the girl ? Feed her with this, would you ?," said Jivananda.

Nimi then squated down on the floor, laid the girl on her lap and began to feed her with a spoon. A few drops of tears however rolled down her cheek. She had had a son who was dead and the spoon with which she fed the girl now belonged to him. She instantly wiped her eyes however and smiled as she asked, "Do tell me, brother, whose daughter it is ?"

"What's that to thee, you naughty thing ?," retorted Jivananda.

"Give me the girl, would you ?"

"What will you do with her?"

"I will feed her, nurse her, fondle her"—the wretched tears would come again. Nimi wiped them off again and smiled. "What will you do with it? You will have many children," said Jivananda.

"Doesn't matter," said Nimi, "let me have her for sometime at least. You may take her away later on."

"Keep her then, and go to the dogs with her. I shall come and see her now and then. She is a Kayestha's daughter, mind. Now I am off."

"What! going? Won't you take anything? The day is far advanced and you mustn't go without your meal. You'll eat my head if you do."*

"To eat thy head and some food to boot! Both of these I can't, dear sister. Do just spare the head and give me a dish of rice if you please."

Nimi then busied herself in getting up the dish for her brother with the child in her arms.

She then placed a plank to sit on and cleaned a yard or two of ground with water she had sprinkled before. She then brought her brother some clean, jasmine-white rice, some tasteful dal, a curry of wild figs, some fish metted from her own tank and some milk. As he sat down to eat, Jivananda said: "I say Nimi, sister, who says there's famine here? In your village you don't seem to have it."

* This is a common imprecation which affectionate people—females particularly—always use as a means of persuasion.

"Oh no!" said Nimi, "there's plenty of distress here. But we are only two souls, what we have with us we eat ourselves and give some to our neighbours. Don't you remember we had some rain—you said rains do fall in woods. Well, for that we could raise some crops even this year. Others sold them but we did not."

"Where's your husband," asked Jivananda. Nimi looked down and softly said: "He's out with a few seers of rice to give to somebody."

Now Jivananda had not had such a hearty meal for many a day. So he did not waste any more time in talk; he finished up the repast in a very short time, making all sorts of odd sounds as he ate. Now Mrs. Nimaimani had cooked for herself and her husband only and out of it she gave away her share of meal. Seeing the plate quite empty now, she was a little disconcerted and poured upon it her husband's share also. Without the least hesitation Jivananda despatched it all to the huge cavity ycleped the stomach.

Then Nimai asked "Would you have anything more, brother?"

"What more can you give?"

"We have a ripe jack-fruit." Nimi brought it up and without a murmur Jivananda despatched that too down that abysmal cavity. Nimi then smiled and said, "I have got nothing more to offer to you."

"Then go," said the brother, "I shall come and eat another day."

Nimi then gave him water to wash his hands and

mouth. As she was pouring it over his hands, she said : "Brother, would you keep a request from me?"

"What's it," asked the brother.

"By my head you will have to."

"You naughty thing, why not tell me?"

"Say you will do it."

"First tell me what it is."

"You'll eat my head if you don't. I beseech you, I fall at your feet."

"Well, I agree that I eat thy head and you fall at my feet—but what is the matter can you tell me?"

Nimi then placed the fingers of one of her hands within those of another, bent her head, and looked at them intently ; then she looked at her brother's face and then looked to the ground till at last she broke out "Shall I call the *Bow*?"*

Jivananda picked up a the brass pitcher and aimed it at his sister's head, exclaiming in feigned anger : "Give me back the child and I shall give thee back the rice and dal that I have taken. You monkey of a girl—mischievous wench how dare you speak of things to me which you should never mention ?"

Nimi said : "I grant that I am all that you say, but shall I call your wife?"

"I am off," said Jivananda and made for the door. Nimi bolted it and stood before it. "You must kill me," said she, "before you go. You shall not go without seeing your wife."

* A brother's wife is called a *Bow*.

"Do you know," said Jivananda in feigned anger, "how many men I've killed?"

Nimi grew very much offended. "A great thing that to brag of, to be sure!" said she. "You'll desert your wife and kill people and you think I will fear you. Never think of that, for, mind you, we are children of the same parents. If killing is a great thing you may as well kill me and brag of it."

Jivananda smiled and said : "Go and fetch her,—the wretch. But mind, if you speak to me like this again, I may spare you but I'll cut the hairs off the head of the rogue of your husband and with whey on his shaven knoll make him ride a donkey with tail foremost."*

Nimi said in an undertone, "I wouldn't be half sorry for it," and went away smiling. She then entered a cottage close by, in which a woman with shaggy hairs was spinning on a wheel with a tattered rag on. Nimi went and said "*Bow, quick, quick.*"

"Well, what's it, why are you in such a hurry? Thy husband has beaten thee and I am to oil thy sores; is it?" said the *Bow* smiling.

"Very much near the mark," said Nimi, "have you got oil in the room?"

* I have translated the joke literally as to render it in any other way would have been hopeless. The brother-in-law is a licensed joker and a butt of jokes himself in Bengali Society. Shaving of one's head, bathing in whey, and making one ride a donkey specially with the tail foremost is regarded as a great indignity, and people were usually put to such punishments by tyrants of yore. The threat of this indignity is a common joke in Bengal.

The woman brought out her oilpot and Nimi quickly took some oil out of it in her hand, rubbed the *Bow's* hairs with it, hastily dressed her hair up into a passable knot. She then gave her an affectionate little blow with her hand and cried "Where is thy Dacca *sari*?" The woman was a little surprised and said, "Well! you are off your mind, it seems!"

Nimi gave her another blow and said "Get it out, you wretch."

She brought out the *sari* for the fun of it;—unhappy though she was, she was not lost to the fascination of fun. She was young and her youthful form was as lovely as a blooming lotus. In her complexion there was the vision of dreamland, in her eyes the wistful glance of youth, on her lips the ever brightening smile, and deep down her heart a fund of patience and forbearance. Though going on half-rations, she did not seem to have lost much grace and beauty—a beauty that scorned embellishments and shone forth in full glow. Like the lightning hid by clouds, like genius not yet revealed, like music in the world of sounds, like happiness in the gloom of death, her beauty had something inexpressibly sweet in it—inexpressible softness, nobleness, and love and devotion.

Smiling she brought out the *sari* and asked : "Here you are, Nimi! What will you do with it?"

"You'll put it on," said Nimi.

"What then?"

Nimi then lovingly coiled her lovely arms round her

lovely neck and said "My brother has come here and asked you to go to him."

"What's the use of this *sari* then ? Let me go as I am."

Nimi gave her a slap ; the *baw* dragged her by her shoulder out of the hut and said, "Come, I'll meet him in these rags" and obstinately refused to change her clothes. Nimi took her to the door of her house and, thrusting her in, banged the door and waited outside.

Chapter XVI

The *Bow* was aged twenty-five but she did not look a day older than Nimi. As she entered the house in her rags, it seemed to be lit up with her grace—as if many budding flowers which had been lying hidden under leaves suddenly burst out in bloom—as if a bottle of rose water which lay tight corked had been suddenly broken up—as if some body had thrown the incense into a smouldering fire which burst into flame and fragrance. On entering the house she looked about for her husband. She could not find him at once. Then she saw that, laying his head on the trunk of a small mango tree that stood in the yard, Jivananda stood weeping. She slowly walked up to him and held him by his hand. We do not say that her eyes did not grow wet—Heaven knows that the stream that rushed to her eyes could drown Jivananda if it were allowed to flow. But she restrained herself and with her husband's hand in hers, said, "Don't weep dear, I know you are weeping for me, but I am quite happy with my present life."

Jivananda looked up, wiped his eyes, and asked his wife: "Dear, why are you in this tattered garb? I did not certainly leave you in want."

"Your wealth," said Santi, "I have kept for you. I do not know what to do with money. When you come back and take me back as your wife—"

"Take you back!" interrupted Jivananda, "I have not deserted you, Santi."

"No, you have not—but when you have fulfilled your vow, when you are free to love me again"—

She could not finish, for Jivananda held her in deep embrace and placing his head on her shoulder stood still for a while. He sighed at last and said: "Ah! wherefore did I see you again?"

"Why, indeed?", said Santi, "you must have broken your vow?"

"That matters little, I may expiate the transgression,—but I cannot make up my mind to go back, having seen you once again. It is for this that I told Nimi that it was no use seeing you now. I cannot return when once I have seen you. All the desirable things of earth, all vows, sacrifices and prayers, are weighed against you in the scales. I cannot always tell which would kick the beam. What shall I do with the country? You are my everything. With you I could build up a heaven in any plot of land on God's earth. Why should I fight for the country? The people are suffering? But who suffers more than the wretch who has to abandon a wife like you? Who is poorer than the husband who sees you in torn rags? You are the support of all my piety; what do I care for the religion which asks me give up my greatest support. For what merit do I add to my crop of sins by trampling over lands and woods, gun in hand, and killing and slaying right and left? I donot know if the world will ever come under the

sway of *The Children* but I know this that *you* are entirely in my power—you who are greater than the world and are a heaven to me.—Come, let us go home. I *will* not go back."

Santi could not speak for some time. She then slowly said, "For shame, my love! You are a hero and my greatest pride in life is that I am a hero's spouse. You will forsake the hero's duty for the petty sake of the trifle that a woman is! Do not love me—I do not want the pleasure,—but grant me this that you will never swerve from the path of a hero's duty. But do tell me one thing before you go. What have you got to do to expiate this transgression?"

"Well, a trifle—fasting, a gift of 12 *Kahans* of cowrie."

Santi smiled and said, "I know what it is; now, is the expiation the same for many faults as for one?"

Jivananda was startled and asked in distress: "What do you mean by this?"

"I have got a prayer to make—do not make the expiation before you see me again."

Jivananda smiled. "You needn't fear that" he said, "I could not die before seeing you. In fact I am in no hurry to die. I won't stay here longer, I cannot have my fill of looking at you now, but I am sure I will have the opportunity some day. Our desire will one day be fulfilled. I will go now; but you must keep one request from me—you must give up this dress and go and live in my ancestral home."

THE ABBEY OF BLISS

Santi enquired as to where he intended to go from there.

"I will go to the abbey now to look for the master. I am rather anxious for the way in which he has gone to the town. If I don't find him in the temple I will go to town."

Chapter XVII

Bhavananda sat in the temple chanting *Harinama* when Jnanananda, a spirited *Child*, came up to him.

"How now, Goswami," asked Bhavananda, "why do you look so grave?"

"All is not well," said Jnanananda, "for that job of yesterday, the Muslims are catching every soul in saffron robes they can get hold of. All the *Children* have left their saffron garments to-day, but Master Satyananda has gone alone with them towards the town. I donot know but he may fall into the hands of the Mussulmans."

"That Mussulman does not breathe in Bengal," said Bhavananda, "who can keep him confined. I know Dhirananda has followed him. Still I'll go and have a walk in the town. You just look after the Abbey."

So saying Bhavananda retired to a private chamber and got out some clothes from a large trunk. He was then suddenly transformed ; the saffron robe gave place to the *pyjama*, *mirzai*, and *Kaba* and the head was adorned by *amama* and the feet by *Nugra* shoe. He wiped off the prints of sandal from the face and his handsome face stood out beautifully against his dark beards and moustaches. He then looked quite like a Mougal youth.

Thus dressed, Bhavananda started off after providing himself with arms. About two miles from the place were two small hills overgrown with jungles. Between

the two hills was a secluded place where several horses were kept. It was the stable of the monks. Bhavananda got a horse from among them and rode toward.

He was suddenly stopped on the way ; for, on the bank of the murmuring stream beside the road, he found a female figure lying like a star dropped from the sky or a flash of lightning weaned from its home in the clouds. He saw that there was no sign of stirring life, and an empty pill-box lay beside her. Bhavananda was startled, pained and awed. He too like Jibananda had not seen Mahendra's wife and child ; and he had not before him the circumstances which led Jivananda to suspect this to be Mohendra's wife. He had not seen the master and Mahendra being carried away together as prisoners nor did he see the daughter there. From the pill-box he inferred that some woman must have poisoned herself. He alighted from his horse, sat by the body and mused for a time with his hand on his forehead. He examined the head, the armpits, hands and feet of the body and tried other signs unknown to others. He then said to himself : "There is time yet, but what shall I gain by reviving her ?" He thus mused for some time and at last entered the woods, and shortly after, returned with some leaves. He pressed the leaves between his hands and forced some juice into the mouth by parting her lips and jaws ; some of it he poured into the nose and with the rest began to smear the body. He repeated the process and, now and again, put his hand to the nose to feel the breath. It seemed as if all was

in vain, but after a long trial Bhavananda's face grew bright—he felt a faint breath in his fingers. He then smeared the body with more juice and breath began to grow fuller. Feeling the pulse, he felt that it had grown quick. Then Kalyani slowly opened her eyes like the morning glow as it first dawns in the east or the blooming of the lotus as it first opens its eyes of a morn or the sweet breath of love when first it blows on human heart. Bhavananda then took up the half-revived body on his horse and rode off with it to town.

Chapter XVIII

Before it was night every one in the *Society of the Children* knew that Satyananda and Mahendra were prisoners in the gaol of the town. Then the *Children* began to come in by tens and hundreds and soon filled the woods surrounding the temple. Every one of them was armed ; every one had fire in the eye, pride in his mien and resolution at heart. At first they were a hundred men, then a thousand, then two thousand and so the numbers went on increasing. Then, sword in hand, Jnanananda stood at the gate of the temple and spoke aloud :—“ We have often thought to break up this bird’s nest of Moslem rule, to pull down the city of the renegades and throw it into the river—to burn this pig-sty to ashes and make mother earth free from evil again. Friends, that day has come. Our great master, who is great above everybody else and is limitless in his knowledge, who is ever pure, and is a patriot and a well-wisher of his people, who has pledged his life for the revival of the True Religion, whom we look upon as an incarnation of Vishnu—this man has been imprisoned in the gaol of the Mussulmans. Friends, are our swords not sharp enough ? ” he stretched his arm and said “ do not our arms carry strength enough ”—and stroked his breast and said “ have we not courage in our hearts ? Friends, by the name of the Lord,—the slayer of Hiranyakasipu, Dantabakra, Sisupala and

other mighty *asuras*—our arms are inspired with infinite strength—God is almighty and if he so wills ours shall be the victory. Come, let us go and break the infidel city down to dust, purify the pig-sty with fire and throw it into water, break up the swallow's nest and throw its heather to the winds. Sing the name of the Lord, oh Friends."

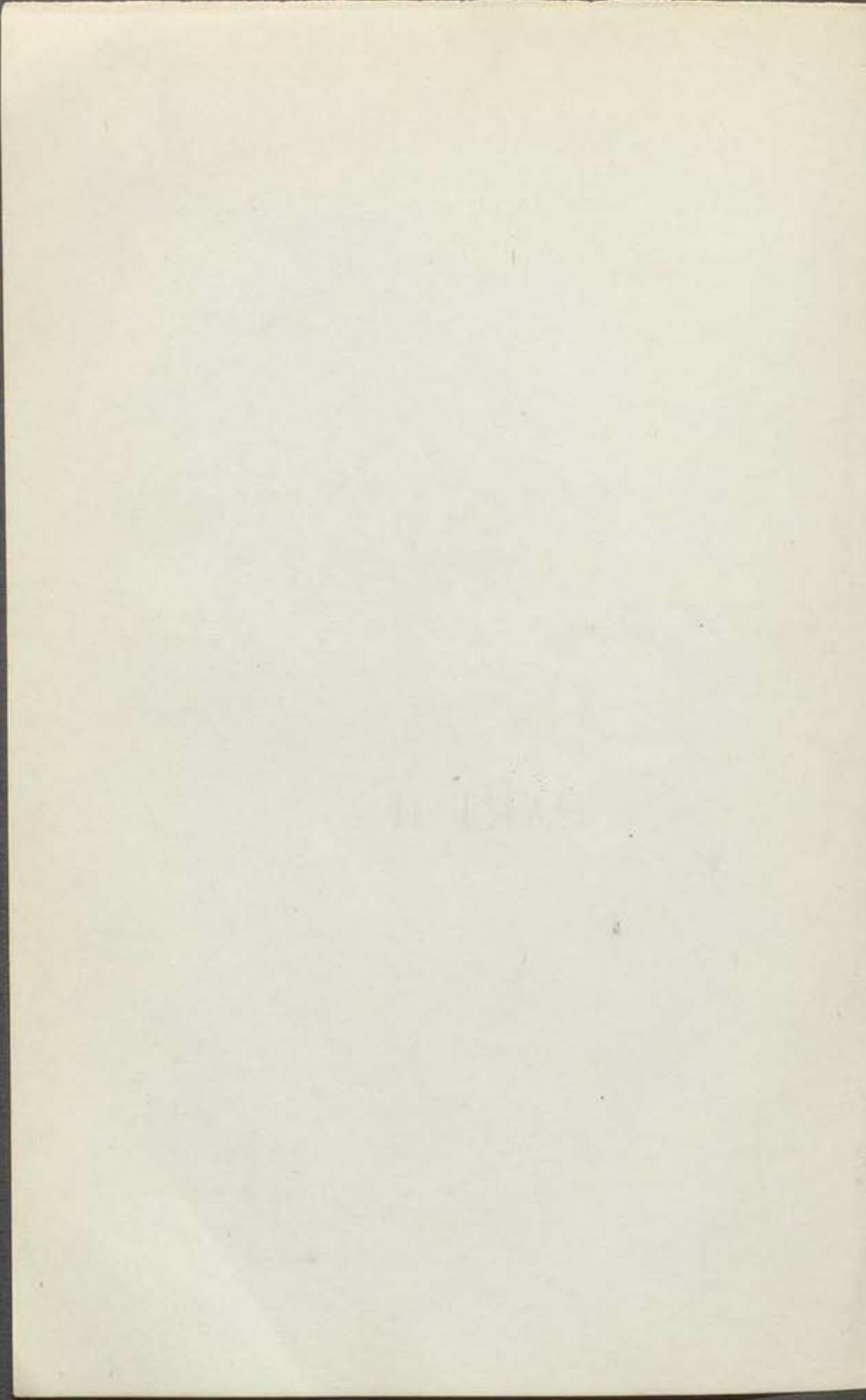
At that time the woods rang with a thousand voices crying in terrible tone the name of the Lord. A thousand swords jingled at once—a thousand spears shot up in the air with their heads, the clappings on defiant arms made a sound like a thunder clap. A thousand *dholas* made a roaring sound in the rough backs of the warriors. Beasts were scared away by the noise, birds flew away from the woods in terror and covered the sky. Hundreds of drums beat at once and parties of the *Children* began to issue from the woods in due array. With slow and solemn steps, chanting *Harinam* aloud, they marched towards the town in that dark night. The noise of the crumpling of clothes, the clash of arms, the stifled voices and occasional loud shouts of *Haribol* marked their march. Slowly, solemnly, in ire and with fire, the army of the *Children* entered the town and threw it into panic. Overtaken by this sudden invasion, the townsmen fled as best they could and the protectors of the town stood amazed and still.

The first thing the *Children* did was to enter the gaol which they broke and to kill the warders. They

released Satyananda and Mahendra and began to dance with joy and there was a great noise of *Haribol*. After getting them out of goal, *Children* set fire to the houses of the Mussulmans wherever they found them. Then Satyananda said "Turn back, friends, it's no use to make havoc where there is no need for it."

When news of these outrages of the *Children* reached the authorities they despatched a body of Pergunnah Sepoys to suppress them. They had not only matchlocks but also a cannon with them. On their approach, the *Children* issued from the *Wood of Bliss* and advanced to fight. But what could sticks and spears or a score or two of muskets do before the cannon's mouth? The *Children* were soon defeated and dispersed.

PART II



Chapter I

Santi had lost her mother early, and this was one of the principal factors that went to the making of her singular character. Her father was a Brahmin of the *Adhyapaka* class and had no other woman in the household. Naturally, when her father gave his lessons to his class, Santi sat near him. At other times she would play with the pupils who stayed under her father's roof and they all loved and patted her. The result of this constant association with males in her childhood was that Santi did not learn to dress like females or, having learnt to do so, gave it up. She used to dress like a man with her *koncha* dangling before her. If anybody made her wear her cloth like a girl, she would instantly change it and wear it like a boy again. The scholars of the *tole* did not dress their hair, nor did Santi—and in sooth who was there that could dress her hair into a knot. The scholars would dress her hair with a wooden comb and her locks flowed in curls upon her back and breast and hands and cheeks. The scholars wore sandal prints. Santi did likewise. She used to weep that she could not wear the sacred thread, but all the same, when the boys sat down to their morning and evening prayers, she did not miss imitating their actions. * * *

Another result of it all was that as she grew older, Santi began to learn what the scholars read. She did

not know a word of grammar but she got by heart verses from Bhatti Kavya, Raghuvamsa, Kumarsambhava, Naishadhacharita and other works with their full explanations. The father saw this and thought that "what will happen will happen" as the adage goes ; so he began to teach her the Mughdhavodha Grammar. Santi began to learn very quickly and astonished her preceptor. He taught her one or two works on literature along with the grammar. And then everything got confused, for her father now died.

Santi then became an orphan without a refuge. The *tole* broke up and the scholars left the place. But they loved Santi and could not leave her behind. One of them very kindly took her to his house. This was the man who later on joined the *Society of Children* and took the name of Jivananda. We shall call him by his adopted name.

Jivananda's parents were then alive. He acquainted them with the whereabouts of the girl. "Now, who is to bear the burden of this girl," they asked. "I have brought her," Jivananda answered, "and I will do it." The parents were agreeable. Jivananda was unmarried and Santi had reached a marriageable age. So Jivananda married her.

So soon, however, as the marriage was concluded, every body began to repent of it. Everybody thought it was a bad business, for Santi would not dress like a girl nor make up her hair into a knot. She would not stay within the house but persisted in going out to play with

the boys of the village. There was a jungle near Jivananda's house. She would enter it alone and hunt about for a peacock or a deer or some rare fruits or flowers. Now, the parents-in-law first remonstrated with Santi, then scolded her, and even used the rod upon her and at last began to lock her up. Santi was much chagrined at this persecution, and, finding the door ajar one day, made good her escape without letting anybody know it.

Once out in the woods, she picked up some flowers and with their juice painted her cloth and dressed herself up as a stripling of an ascetic. At that time, sannyasins roamed in bands all over the country. Now, Santi in her mendicant's clothes begged her way to the road to Juggernaut. Presently a company of sannyasins appeared on the road and Santi joined them.

Sannyasins of those days were not like the innocent representatives of the class to-day. They were generally a compact body, well-read, well-built, deft in the use of arms and qualified in other ways. They were usually a sort of rebels, for they plundered the king's treasures everywhere. When they saw a stout and well-built boy, they would kidnap him, give him proper training and make him a member of their company. They were therefore known as the boy-kidnappers.

Santi entered one of these companies as a young sannyasin. At first they were not disposed to take her in for the delicacy of her physique, but finding her sharp, clever and active they gladly enrolled her, as one of them. With them Santi had athletic exercises, learnt

the use of arms and soon grew hardy. She travelled much with them, saw many scuffles and learnt many kinds of work.

By and by the signs of youth made their appearance and many people of the party had no doubt that she was a woman in disguise. But sannyasins usually had their impulses under restraint ; they knew it, but winked at it.

There were many learned men among the Sanayasins. One of them began to give lessons to Santi, on seeing that she was fairly well up in Sanskrit. We have said that the sannyasins had great self-control ; but every one did not have it. This sannyasin had it not ; or perhaps he began to be stung anew by amour, at the sight of Santi's new-born and transcendent charms on her accession to puberty. Santi was not injured by his transparent tricks to gain her favour but rather profited by them. She had never learnt the modesty of her sex ; but now the woman in her nature began to come out on the surface. Her soul became illumined by the lovely radiance of her faultless female grace being cast on her manly heart. She gave up her study.

But the preceptor was obstinate. He rushed on Santi whenever he saw her, as much as a hunter would run after a doe. But by exercise Santi had acquired strength which was not always possible for a man to cultivate, and when the preceptor approached him she always propitiated him with a plentiful offering of

kicks and cuffs—and they were not easy to swallow in all conscience. Finding her alone one day the sannyasin caught her tightly by the hand. Santi could not free her hand; but, as ill-luck would have it, it was her left hand. With her right she gave him such a blow on his forehead that the sannyasin rolled senseless on the ground. Santi then deserted the party and fled.

She was an intrepid girl and made for her village alone. With her courage and strength she easily succeeded in getting on without difficulty. Feeding herself on charity or upon wild fruits, and victorious in the many scuffles she had on the way, Santi arrived at last in her father-in-law's house and found that her father-in-law was dead. Her mother-in-law would not take her in for fear of losing her caste. So, Santi went out again.

Jivananda was then at home and he followed her. Meeting Santi on the way he asked, "Why did you leave my house? Where had you been so long?" Santi gave out the whole truth. Jivananda could know truth from falsehood and readily believed her.

Now Cupid, who delights in a flowery bow, does not care to waste on a wedded couple his missiles—built with the sweet amorous glance of heavenly beauties and illumined by the lustre of their maddening eye-lashes. The English light their roads even on a full-moon night, and the Bengali would pour oil on a head wet with it; not so with men alone,—the moon too sometimes delights in displaying herself

when the sun is shining ; Indra showers his rain on the sea ; Kuvera carries wealth to the coffers that overflow with it ; Death takes away the man who is most wanted by his friends and people. Only Cupid is never guilty of such prodigal folly. So soon as a bridal tie is complete he avoids the pair and, leaving them entirely to Prajapati (Hymen), goes looking about for somebody else whose heart's blood he might drink. But perhaps the god of the flowery bow had no work at hand now, and so he accidentally wasted two flowery arrows here. One pierced Jivananda's heart, and another fell on Santi's and made her aware for the first time in her life that it was after all a woman's heart—a very soft thing. Like the flower-bud opened by the first rain drop from the young clouds, Santi suddenly burst to bloom and looked to Jivananda with smiling eyes.

"I will not disown you ;" said Jivananda, " You have only to stay here till I come back."

Santi asked, "Are you sure you will come back ?" Jivananda did not speak nor look any way, but under the shade of the cocoanut grove beside the road, he touched her lips with his and went away feeling that he had drunk the heavenly sweet.

Jivananda excused himself to his mother and took leave of her. His sister Nimi was recently married to a person in Bhairabipur and some love had grown up between Jivananda and his brother-in-law. Jivananda took Santi to that place. The brother-in-law gave him a bit of land. They built a hut on the spot and lived

there happily for some time. By her living with her husband, Santi's mannish nature slowly disappeared or was suppressed, and the loveliness of her woman's heart daily developed. Their days passed off like a pleasant dream.

But soon the dream vanished. Under the influence of Satyananda, Jivananda adopted the creed of the *Children* and left Santi. It was at Nimi's instance that they met again for the first time after the separation—a visit we have described in a previous chapter.

Chapter II

After Jivananda went away, Santi sat upon the veranda of Nimai's cottage. There was no more any tears in her eyes ; she had wiped her eyes, made herself cheerful and was feigning a smile. She was however a bit pensive and abstracted.

Nimai understood her and said, " Yet you 've met, and that's a great deal."

Santi made no answer but remained silent. Nimai saw she was not going to speak out her mind ; she knew that Santi did not like to speak out her mind. So she looked for another topic of conversation and said " Look *Bow*, how do you like this girl ? " " Where could you get her," asked Santi, " I did not know you had a daughter."

" Go to, you naughty thing," said Nimai, " It's not mine, it is my brother's girl."

Nimai did not say this to tease Santi. By 'brother's girl' she meant that she had got her from her brother. But Santi did not take it that way ; she thought it was meant to irritate her and answered, " I did not want the name of the father but of the mother of the child."

Nimai was rightly served and nonplussed ; so she said : " Who knows, dear, whose girl this is ? My brother picked it up from somewhere, I hadn't time to ask him about it. But you see these are famine times and you have plenty of people throwing away their children ;

many boys and girls were brought even to us for sale. But who cares to take another's child"—(tears rushed to her eyes as before, but she wiped them off and said) "The girl is nice and plump and looked so lovely that I begged her of my brother and got her."

Santi then had a long talk with Nimai on all sorts of odd topics. Then Nimai's husband came and Santi left for her cottage. Once in it, she shut the door, took some ash out of the oven, and put it apart. On the rest of it she poured the rice she had cooked for herself. Then she stood thinking for a long time and mused within herself: "What I have so long thought I will do to-day. The hope that held me from doing it hitherto is now realised. Has it been realised or has it failed?—It's failed. But life itself is a failure. What I have thought I will do. The expiation for one offence is the same as for a hundred."

So thinking Santi threw the rice into the oven, got some fruits from the wood and took them instead. Then she took out the Dacca *Sari* on which Nimai had so set her heart and tore off its border. What remained of it she dyed well in red ochre. It was dusk by the time she had dyed and dried her cloth, and then she shut the door and engaged herself in a curious work. She cut off a part of her long and shaggy hair with a pair of scissors and kept them apart. What remained on her head she made up into braids. The rough hair was changed into a head of braids beautifully set. Tearing her saffron cloth into two, she wore one round her waist

and with the other covered her breast. There was a little mirror in the room ; Santi recovered it from its long exile and looked well at her dress in it. "Alas," said she, as she looked at it, "How am I to cover *these*?" She then threw away the glass and took up the hair she had cut off and made them up into false beards and moustaches. But she could not put them on. "For shame," she thought, "those days are gone and I cannot do it any more. But it is good to have it at hand to give a lesson to the old fellow." She then took out a large deer-skin and tied it to her neck covering with it the whole of her front up to the knees. Thus dressed, this new sannyasin looked on all sides from within the room. When it was midnight Santi emerged from her house in the dark and entered the deep forest. The nymphs of the wood heard at dead of night the following song sung in melodious strains :

"Trotting on horseback where dost thou go ?"
"I go to the battle, tell me not—'no' !
Hari, Hari, Hari, so shall I cry,
And spring to the fight prepared to die !
Who art thou ? Who's thine ? Why follow me
Victory ! O woman, I care not for thee !"
"Prithee my dearest don't leave behind
Thy bride so suffering, be thou O kind !"
"Hark thee ! The music, victory it sings,
Thirsting for battle my war-horse it springs.
At home my mind, O, no more would be
Victory ! O woman, I care not for thee !"

Chapter III

On the next day in one of the private chambers in the *Abbey of Bliss* three dejected captains of *The Children* were talking together. Jivananda asked Satyananda : " Maharaj, why have the gods grown offended with us ? For what fault have we been beaten by the Mussulmans ? "

" The gods are not averse," said Satyananda. " In warfare you have defeats as well as victories. The other day we were victorious, to-day we are worsted. It is the final victory that is worth the name. I am sure that Vishnu who has ever been so kind to us with his conch, disc, club and lotus will prove as kind again. We will have to carry through the vow which we have taken with the touch of His sacred foot. If we fail, eternal Hell shall be our lot. I have no doubt about our ultimate success, but we have to recognise that, as no work can succeed without divine grace, so too is human enterprize necessary for everything. The reason for our defeat is that we have no arms. What can sticks and spears do before cannons, guns and shot ? So we have been beaten because we were wanting in enterprize. What we have now to do is to see that we may not lack those arms in future."

" It is a difficult thing," said Jivananda. " Difficult, Jivananda ! " answered Satyananda, in surprise. " How

could you, being a *Child*, say that? Is there anything much too difficult for a *Child*?" "Command, sire," returned Jivananda, "how we might secure them." "To secure them I shall go to visit the shrines to-night," said Satyananda, "Till I come back do not take up any serious work. But preserve in the meantime the unity of *The Children*, get them their food and clothing and replenish their coffers for our mother's conquests. This is what I charge you two with."

"I do not see," said Bhavananda, "how you could get these things by visiting the shrines. It would create a lot of noise to have guns and ammunition bought and sent to this distance. Besides, where could you get so many as we want? Who will be selling them, or who again will bring them down?" "We could not do the work by buying them at a distant place," said Satyananda, "I shall send mechanics and you will have to make them here."

"What! here in this Abbey?" exclaimed Jivananda. "That can never be," Satyananda replied; "I have been thinking about it long and God has put an opportunity in our way to-day. You said God was averse to us. I see that He is entirely in our favour."

"Where shall we have the workshop?" asked Bhavananda.

S. At Padachinha.

J. How's that? How could you do it in Padachinha?

S. If it was not for this what else was there for my

being so anxious about Mahendra's taking this great vow ?

J. Has Mahendra taken the vow ?

S. Not yet, but he will. To-night I shall initiate him.

J. We do not know what anxiety has been shown to induce Mahendra Sinha to take the vow. What has become of his wife and child ? Where have they been kept ? I found a girl to-day beside the stream and have left her with my sister. Beside her lay a beautiful woman. Can it be, that they are the wife and child of Mahendra ? I thought it was so.

S. They *are* Mahendra's wife and child.

Bhavananda started up. He then knew that the woman whom he had revived was the wife of Mahendra, but he did not think it needful to give out anything.

"How did Mahendra's wife die," asked Jivananda.

S. She killed herself with poison.

J. Why did she kill herself ?

S. God had bidden her in a dream to die.

B. Was it for the benefit of our Society that this command came ?

S. So it would seem from what Mahendra said. It is now near the end of the day and I must go to do the religious duties of the hour and then I shall be engaged in initiating the new *Children*.

B. *Children* ? Why, is there anybody other than Mahendra who presumes to be your disciple to-day ?

S. Yes, another stranger. I never saw him before,

he has come only to-day. He is a very young man and I have been greatly pleased with his looks and conversation. I am disposed to think that he is a true coin. I charge Jivananda with the work of training him up in the duties of a *Child*, for he is a great hand in winning people's hearts. I will be going now. I have but one other advice to give you which you must listen to with attention."

They folded their arms and humbly said : " As your Holiness pleases."

Satyananda said, " If you two have been guilty of any transgression or if you happen to be so ere I come back, do not expiate it till I come back. When I come back, expiation will be absolutely necessary for you."

So saying Satyananda went to his own place, and Jivananda and Bhavananda stood there amazedly looking at each other's face.

" Was that meant for you ? " asked Bhavananda.

" Possibly. I went to my sister to keep Mahendra's daughter there."

" There's no harm in that, that's not forbidden—but did you do yourself the pleasure of seeing your wife there ? "

" He thinks so, perhaps."

Chapter IV

After finishing his evening prayers, Satyananda called Mahendra and said,

“Your daughter still lives.”

“Where, Maharaj ? ”

“Why do you call me ‘Maharaj’ ? ”

“Because every body calls you so and I think heads of monasteries are so called everywhere. Where is my daughter, Maharaj ? ”

“Before you hear that, give me a clear and definite answer as to your wishes to take the vow of *The Children* ? ”

“I have made up my mind to take it.”

“Then do not want to learn where your daughter is.”

“Why, Maharaj ? ”

“When any one takes this vow, he has to snap all ties that bind him to his wife, children and kinsmen. You have got to expiate even the transgression of seeing the face of your wife or children. Till the *Children* have reached the consummation of their desire, you may not even look at your daughter’s face. So that, if you have decided to take the vow of *The Children*, what will you do with knowing where your daughter is? You cannot see her by any means now.”

“Why this hard rule, sire ? ”

“The work of *The Children* is an arduous one and

only he who has renounced everything is fit for the work. Like the kite tied to the reel, a man who is tied to affections can never leave the world behind to soar in the heavens."

"I confess I do not quite see it, Maharaj. Is every one who looks at his wife or child unfit for any great work?"

"A look at those we love makes us unmindful of the work of the gods. It is one of the articles of our creed that a *Child* must be prepared to die as soon as it may be necessary. Could you ever give your life for any cause if you thought of the wife and the children you had left behind."

"But could I forget my daughter, only if did not see her?"

"If you can't, don't take the Vow."

"Has every *Child* thus renounced his wife and children before taking that vow? *The Children* must then be quite a handful, I should suppose."

"The *Children* are of two classes, the initiated and the uninitiated. Those who are uninitiated are either householders or beggars. They come to fight and disappear with their share of the booty or other reward. Those who are initiated have to renounce everything. They are the leaders of the *Society*. I don't ask you to be one of the uninitiated, for there is no lack of men to fight with sticks or spears at the time of battle. You cannot be entrusted with any serious work of the *Society* unless you are initiated."

"What is the initiation? Why should I be initiated

anew? I have already had to go through that ceremony once before."

" You must give up your old creed and take a creed from me anew."

" How am I to give up my *Mantram*?"

" I shall show you the way."

" Why should I have to take a new one ?"

" Because the *Children* are all Vaishnavas."

" I do not know how it is so. How could the *Children* be Vaishnavas when the avoidance of all blood-shed is considered as the highest virtue with them ? "

" That's the Vaishnava creed of Chaitanya. It is the creed of that spurious Vaishnavism which grew up in imitation of atheistic Buddhism. The ideal of true Vaishnavism is the chastisement of the wrong-doers and the salvation of mother earth ; for our patron Deity is the Preserver of the Universe. Ten times was he born in flesh to save the world. It was he who fought and killed demons like Keshi, Hiranyakasipu, Madhu, Kaitabha, Mur and Narak, Rakshasas like Ravana, and tyrants like Kansa and Sisupala. He is the Victor and the Bestower of Victory. He is the saviour of the world and the patron Deity of " The Children." Chaitanya's Vaishnavism is not true Vaishnavism, but only half the true faith. Its God is only Love ; but the true God is not Love alone but also Infinite Power. Chaitanya's Vishnu is all Love, our Vishnu is all Power. We are all of us Vaishnavas but the creed of either is only half the whole creed. Do you grasp it ?"

"I am afraid not—it seems all so new to me. Once I met a Christian priest at Cassimbazar ; he said something like it :—God is Love, he said, and wanted us to love Jesus. It is all very much like that."

"I have only tried to make you understand what our ancestors have all along believed in. Have you ever heard that the Deity consists of three *Gunas*?"

"I have ; *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* are the three attributes of the Lord."

"All right, these three *gunas* have got to be propitiated by distinct modes of worship. From *Sattva* springs God's mercy and love and this is to be propitiated by Love.—That's what the followers of Chaitanya do. From *Rajas* springs His Power,—this has got to be propitiated by fight, by slaying the enemies of the gods. This is what we do. From *Tamas* the Lord takes what form he chooses and appears as the four-handed Deity and other gods. This is to be worshipped by garlands, sandal, &c. This is what the ordinary man does. Do you understand now?"

"I do ; then the *Children* are only a religious community?"

"Quite so, we do not want sovereignty ; we only want to kill these Mussulmans, root and branch, because they have become the enemies of God."

Chapter V

The *tete a tete* with Mahendra finished, Satyananda entered with Mahendra the temple in the abbey where that beautiful and noble image of Vishnu was placed. There was an unusual display of beauty there at the hour. It was lit up with various lamps of gold and silver set with jewels, and heaps of flowers filled the temple with beauty and fragrance.

Within the temple sat another person who was slowly chanting the name of *Hari*. On Satyananda entering the room he stood up and made his obeisance. The monk then asked him, "Do you want to be initiated?"

"Please have the kindness," replied the man. Satyananda then addressed them both and said, "Have you bathed and fasted and kept yourselves pure as enjoined?"

"Yes," they replied.

"Take the vow in the presence of the Deity that you will scrupulously follow the rules of the *Children's creed*."

"We will."

"That you will renounce your home till the mother is saved."

"We will."

"Your brothers and sisters?"

"Yes."

"Wife and children?"

"Yes."

"Kinsmen and servants?"

"Everything we will give up."

"Riches and pleasures."

"We renounce them all."

"You will conquer your passions and never share a seat with a woman?"

"We will never share such a seat and will conquer our impulses."

"Swear in the Divine Presence that you will never earn any money for yourself or your relations and that what you earn you will make over to the treasury of our Society."

"We do swear."

"That you will take up arms yourselves and fight for the True Religion."

"We will."

"That you will never fly from the battle-field."

"Never."

"If you break your vow?"

"We will enter a burning pyre or end our lives by taking poison."

"There is another thing," said Satyananda, "and that is caste. To what caste do you belong? I know Mahendra is a Kayestha but what is the caste of the other?"

The other man replied, "I am a Brahmin."

"Well," said Satyananda, "could you give up your caste? All the *children* belong to one caste; we do not make any distinction between Brahmins and Sudras in this great mission. What do you say to that?"

"We also shall not make any distinction and shall consider ourselves as children of one mother."

"Then I shall initiate you. Never break the vow you have taken here. Vishnu Himself is witness to it. He who slew *Ravana*, *Kamsa*, *Hiranyakasipu*, *Jarasandha*, *Sisupala* and others, who knows the inmost thoughts of everybody, who is all-victor, all-powerful and all-regulator, who dwells alike in the thunderbolt of Indra and in the claws of the cat, He will send the breaker of faith to eternal perdition."

"So be it," they said.

"Sing then 'Hail mother,'" said the monk and the two sang the hymn of the Mother. The monk then initiated them in proper form.

Chapter VI

After the ceremony of initiation was over, Satyananda led Mahendra to a secluded place. When they had taken their seats Satyananda said : " My child, I regard it as a sign of God's favour to our cause that you have taken this vow. A very great service to the Mother will be done by you. Listen to my orders with care now. I do not want you to rove in the woods, fighting, like Jivananda and Bhavananda. You will have now to return to Padachinha and to pursue an ascetic's avocations at home."

Mahendra was sorry and surprised to hear this, but said nothing. " At present," the monk went on, " we have no place to shelter us, none where we might stock our provisions and shut ourselves up securely for a few days, if pressed by a powerful force. We have no fortifications. You have got big buildings and your village is in your own possession. I desire to build a fortress there. If we could throw a ditch and ramparts round the village, establish watches at intervals, and place guns on the ramparts, we could make a good fort altogether. You just go to your home. By and by, a thousand *Children* will reach your place. You will then have to begin to build the fortifications with them. You will build a strong iron chamber in the fort, which will be the treasury of the *Children*. I shall send to your place chests filled with gold which you will require

to spend for all these works. I shall also get expert artisans from different places, and when they come, you will have to establish a foundry and arsenal at Padachinha for the manufacture of guns, powder, shot, etc. It is for doing all this that I ask you to go back home."

Mahendra agreed.

Chapter VII

When Mahendra left after making his obeisance, the second man who was initiated with him came up and bowed before the monk. Satyananda blessed him and ordered him to sit on the black deerskin seat that lay there. He spoke pleasantly to him for some time and then said : " How now, is your love and devotion for Sri Krishna strong enough ? "

" How can I say ? May be what I call love and devotion is either hypocrisy or self-deception."

" You have spoken well," said Satyananda, " engage yourself in such acts as will tend to increase your devotion and I bless thee that thou mayest succeed in thy endeavours. For you are yet of a tender age. Child, I have not yet asked you by what name I may call you."

The new *Child* said, " As your holiness pleases, I am the *servus servorum* of the Vaishnavas."

" Looking at your youth I am disposed to christen you with the name of Nabinananda ; by this name you shall be known in our society. But I wish to ask you one thing ; what was your old name ? You may tell it to me even if there is any bar. It won't reach another's ear if you confide it to me. It is a tenet of the creed of The *Children* that you have to speak to the master what you may not speak to anybody else. There is no harm in telling it."

" My name is Santiram Devasarma."

" Your name is Mrs. Santimani what !"

So saying Satyananda pulled at the long jet black beards of his disciple and the false beards forthwith came off.

"For shame, child," said Satyananda, "how could you think of deceiving me? And if you did, why did you hang such long beards at this age. Even if you had your beards shorter, could you dissemble that voice and look? If I were such a fool as that, I could not have taken such a great work in hand."

Santi—impudent thing—first hid her eyes with her hand and looked down. But presently she took away the hand and, looking in the face of the shrewd old man with her sportive glance, said, "But sire, what is there wrong in what I have done? Can strength never reside in a woman's arms."

"Aye, even as you have water in a cow's foot-print."

"Do you ever try the strength of the *Children*?"

"I do," said Satyananda and brought out a steel bow and a bit of wire. "They have got to put this string to the steel bow," he continued, "the string is only three feet long. The bow springs up with the attempt to bend it and throws off the attempter. He who can string it is a really strong man."

Santi carefully examined the bow and string, and asked "Have all the *Children* passed the test."

"No, I have only tried their strength by its means."

"Has no one passed?"

"Only four have."

"May I ask who they are?"

"You may, one is myself."

"The others?"

"Jivananda, Bhavananda, Jnanananda."

Santi took up the bow, put the string to it with ease, and threw it at Satyananda's feet.

Satyananda was astonished, awed and dumbfounded. Presently he asked, "What's this? are you a goddess or a woman only!"

"A very humble woman, but I have lived a pure and austere life."

"How could it be so? Is it that you were widowed when a child? No, that too is not likely; a widow cannot be so strong, for she has to live on one meal a day."

"No, I have got my husband."

"Is it that he cannot be traced?"

"He can be traced and it is to trace him that I have come here."

Then in Satyananda's mind flashed the sudden light of an old memory like sunshine peeping through a break in the clouds.

"Yes, I remember," he said, "Santi is the name of Jivananda's wife. Are you Jivananda's spouse?"

This time Santi hid her face with her ample braids. It looked as though several trunks of elephants fell on a full-blown lotus.

"Why did you come to do this sinful deed?"

Santi instantly threw her crop of braids on her back, and, pulling herself up, proudly answered: "Where is the sin in it, sire? Do you call it a sin that a wife

shuold follow her husband? If the religion of the *Children* calls it so, it is irreligion. I am the participator in his piety—he is engaged in a pious work and I have come to share it with him."

Satyananda was charmed with her eloquent words and lofty bearing, her heaving breast and trembling lips and her bright eyes filling with tears in the meantime.

" You are a saintly woman," said he, " but consider, child, that a wife is the participator in household pieties alone; of what use is she in a hero's mission ?"

" What hero, sire," returned Santi, " was great without a wife? Would Rama have been a hero without his wife? Can you count the wives that Arjuna had? Bhima, the very personification of Strength, had a number of wives. How many should I name? What need have I indeed to name them to a scholar like you?"

" True, but what hero ever came to the field with his spouse ? "

" When Arjuna fought with the Yadava soldiers from behind the clouds, who was it that led his chariot? Would the Pandavas have fought in Kurukshetra if Draupadi were not with them ? "

" Still, with common men, the woman attracts their mind and diverts them from their proper avocations. The creed of the *children* therefore insists that they should not even sit on the same seat with a woman. Jivananda is my right hand and you have come to maim it."

" I have come to strengthen your right hand, sire. I

am an austere woman and will remain so before your Holiness. I have come to practice piety only and not that I may have the pleasure of seeing my husband. I did not come because I was pining under the pang of separation. I have come because I feel that I ought to participate in the mission which my husband has taken up."

"Very well, I shall watch you for a few days."

"Shall I be permitted to stay in the abbey?"

"Where else could you go tonight?"

"After that?"

"Like the mother Bhowani, you too have got fire on your brow; why should you consume the community of the *Children* with it" returned Satyananda, and then blessed her and bade her adieu.

Santi said to herself, "Bless your old head, man! I have fire on my brow. Is it I or your mother that has had her forehead burnt?"*

In truth Satyananda did not mean that. He was speaking of the fire in her eyes, and an old man like him could not possibly speak it plainly to a young woman!

* *Porakapali* or a woman with a burnt forehead (luck) is a term of abuse. Santi here mischievously translates Satyananda's reference to the fire on her brow—by which he meant the fire of her eyes—into an insultation that she was a woman with a burnt brow. The abuse is also otherwise worded e. g. *tor kapale agun*, 'let the fire be on thy forehead.'

Chapter VIII

For that night Santi had obtained permission to stay in the abbey and therefore she went in search of a room. There were many empty rooms. A servant named Gobardhan—a bit of a *Child* himself—lighted the way to the rooms and showed them to her; but no one met with her approval. At last in despair Gobardhan turned to take her back to Satyananda.

"Brother *Child*," said Santi, "there are some rooms this way; I have not seen them."

"Oh! they are very good rooms," said Gobardhan, "but they have all got inmates."

"Who live there?" she asked.

"Great generals."

"Who are they?"

"Bhavananda, Jivananda and Jnanananda. The Abbey of Bliss is full of bliss."*

"Come, why not let us see the rooms?" Gobardhan first took her to Dhirananda's room. He was reading the *Dronaparva* of the *Mahabharata*. His mind was now engrossed with the account of how Abhimanyu fought with the seven warriors alone, and so he did not speak. Santi left the place without a word.

She then entered Bhavananda's chamber. He was

* The word *ananda* which is tacked to every one of these names means 'bliss.'

at that time contemplating a face, with his eyes fixed above. We cannot say whose face it was, but it was a very lovely face with black and fragrant curls dropping loosely on long eyelashes that went close up to the ears. The little brow between them was immersed in the darksome shade of death, as though death and its conqueror were fighting on it. The eyes were shut, the eye-lashes steady, the lips blue, cheeks pale, the nose cold, and the wind playing with her clothes. Then somehow the grace of life slowly spread itself on the dead body just as the moon hid by autumn clouds lits up the clouds and slowly unfolds her charm ; or as the morning sun slowly gilds the waving clouds one after another till it itself bursts out in its glory lights the world and cheers up land and water. Oh, what beauty, thought Bhavananda. He was engaged in this thought and did not speak. His heart was stung by Kalyani's charms, so he did not look on Santi's charms. Santi then went on to another room and asked " Whose room in this ? "

" Jivananda Thakur's."

" Who is that ? Why, there is no one here."

" He must have gone somewhere and will be coming back presently."

" This is the best room."

" But you can't have it."

" Why not ? "

" Jivananda Thakur stays here."

" Well, he may look out another room for himself."

" That can never be ; he who stops in this room is all but the master of everything. His will is law here."

" Very well, you may go. If I do not find any room here, I shall stay under a tree."

So saying she sent Gobardhan away and entered the room. He then spread the black dearskin seat Jivananda possessed and sat on it. She then enlivened the flame of the lamp and sat down to read one of Jivananda's books.

Jivananda arrived shortly afterwards.

Santi was dressed like a man but Jivananda knew her at once and said, " How is it, Santi ! "

Santi slowly put aside the book, looked up to Jivananda and said, " Who is Santi, sir."

Jivananda was non-plussed and said " Who is Santi ! Why, are you not Santi ? "

Santi scornfully answered, " I am Nobinananda Goswami."

Jivananda laughed aloud and said, " It is a nice un, to be sure. Well now, Nobinananda, what have you come here for ? "

" It is the custom with gentlemen," said Santi gravely, " to call a person 'sir,' and the like on first acquaintance. I too am not speaking with courtesy to you. Why do you then fail to show me the commonest courtesy ? "

" As your Honour pleases," said Jivananda and, throwing the skirt of his cloth round his neck, he continued with folded hands : " and now your servant's

humble submission is that your worship will please intimate why your worship has come to this poor man's hut from Bharuipur."

"I don't see there is any occasion for ridicule either. I don't know Bharuipur. I came here today to adopt the creed of the *Children* and have been initiated to-day."

"Good gracious! Is it true?"

"Why, what's the harm? you too are initiated."

"But you are a woman."

"How's it? Where could you get that?"

"I thought that my consort was a female."

"Consort! have you one?"

"I thought I had."

"You believe then that I am your wife?"

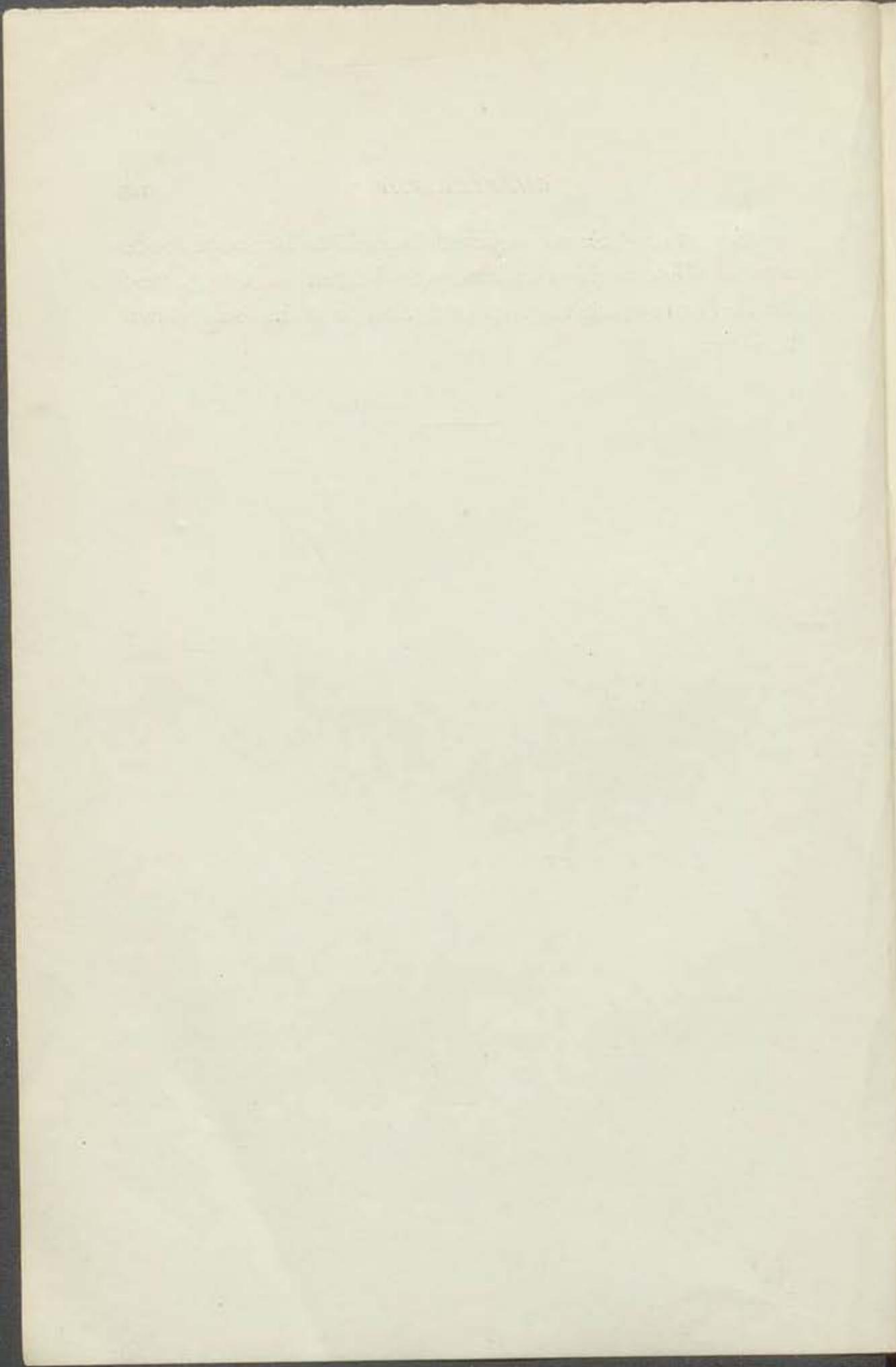
Jivananda again played the penitent by throwing the skirt round his neck and, joining his palms, said: "So I do, worshipful sir."

"If such a ludicrous idea should have possessed your mind, what do you think you ought to do?"

"To take the deerskin off your body and to drink the honey of your lips."

This is only an evidence of your mischievous turn of mind or of an unusual devotion to hemp. At the time of initiation you swore not to sit on the same seat with a woman. If you do really take me for a woman—and indeed people do often make such mistakes, for instance, when a rope is, mistaken for a snake—then you ought to sit on a separate seat. Even talking with me is not meet for you."

So saying Santi devoted herself to her book once again. Jivananda found he was beaten in the game ; he therefore made another bed and laid himself down to sleep.



PART III

Chapter I

The dreaded year '76 came to an end at last, thank God ! After having despatched to the abode of Death over a third of the population of Bengal—nobody knows what that was at that period—the year itself passed away into eternity. In the year '77, Heaven smiled on the people of Bengal. There was good rain, the earth groaned with crops, and those who survived the famine fed themselves to their heart's content. Many people had contracted disease by starving, and a full meal proved fatal to many of them. The crops were full but men were few. In every village desolate and deserted houses became dreaded haunts of beasts and ghosts. Lots of fertile land in every village were left uncultivated and lay fallow or were overgrown with jungle. The country all over was covered with woods. On the very spots where a green harvest smiled before innumerable cattle now grazed ; the gardens which were the pleasure-resorts of the youths of the village slowly changed into dense jungles. Years passed by and the jungles went on growing. In the happy haunts of men, man-eaters hunted deers and other prey. Where a bevy of fair ladies walked before, resounding the streets with the jingle of *nupurs* on their crimson-painted feet and with the sound of raillery with friends and merry peals of laughter, the bear now nursed her child and made it

her home. Where children smiled in their innocence like the jasmine of the evening and laughed their hearty laughs, there wild elephants roamed about in companies and rent asunder the trunks of trees. In the buildings where the Pujas used to be held, the jackal made his home ; the owl haunted the swinging throne of Krishna's image and venomous snakes hunted frogs in broad daylight on the floor of what had been a canopied yard. Crops grew, but there were not men enough to eat them ; merchandise were produced but there were scarcely any buyers for them. Peasants tilled the land but got no money and could pay no rents to the landlord ; the landlords also could not pay their revenue to the State. The State confiscated the property of the zemindars and reduced them to poverty. The land grew richly fertile but wealth did not come to the people and no one had money in hand. Most people lived by depredations, and robbers grew plentiful. All good people retired into seclusion for fear of being molested by the bad ones.

The community of *The Children* meanwhile daily worshipped the image of Vishnu with *tulsi* leaves, smeared in sandal paste and armed with guns pilfered from wherever they could be found. Bhavananda had once told them : "Comrades, if you find on one side piles of jewels and diamonds and a broken matchlock on the other, get this matchlock and leave the treasures behind." Then they began to send emissaries to the villages. These went to the villages and wherever they found 20 or 25 Hindus, fell on Mussulman villages and

set fire to their houses. While the Mussulmans busied themselves in saving their lives, the *Children* plundered their possessions and distributed them among their followers. When the rustics were gratified with a share of the booty, they were taken to the temple of Vishnu and initiated there as *Children* with the touch of the idol's feet. People found that the *Children's* mission was a lucrative business. Besides, they were intensely disaffected with the anarchy and misrule of Mussulman domination. Many people were really anxious to revive Hinduism on seeing that it was gradually sinking. So the ranks of the *Children* daily swelled. Hundreds came every day and thousands every month and, bowing to the feet of Jivananda and Bhavananda, went out in companies to different quarters to punish the Mussulmans. Where they found officials they beat them, and sometimes even killed them ; where they found public money they plundered it ; and where they found a Mussulman habitation they burnt it down to ashes.

The local officials then began to send out large detachments of the army. But now the *Children* were a compact body, well armed and proud of their strength. The Mussulmans could not approach them for their prowess. When they did, the puissant *Children* fell on them, worked havoc in their ranks and cried "Hari, Hari." If ever a Mussulman detachment defeated the *Children*, another body of *Children* would forthwith turn up and cut off the heads of the erstwhile victors and go away shouting "Hari,

Hari." At this time the famous Warren Hastings, the rising sun of the British in India, was the Governor-General. Seated on his *guddee* at Calcutta, he was forging an iron chain by which he thought he would bind the whole of India. God from his heavenly throne, no doubt, said ; "Amen, but that day is distant yet." Now, at any rate, even Warren Hastings had to shudder at the grim halloos of the *Children*.

He first tried to suppress the rebellion with the Foujdari sepoys. But they were so grossly demoralised that they would fly as soon as they would hear the name of *Hari* uttered even by an old woman. So Warren Hastings had to send a body of the Company's sepoys under an able officer, Captain Thomas, to put down the outbreak.

On reaching the spot, Captain Thomas began to make active preparations for the suppression of the revolt. He gathered together the State troops and the soldiery under the zemindars of Bengal and combined them with the well-equipped, well-trained and able-bodied soldiers, native and foreign, of the Company. He then divided the combined army into companies under capable officers and divided the infested country between them. Their orders were to sweep the part of the country under their charge as the fisherman drags a net and to kill the rebels like dogs. The Company's soldiers pulled up their spirits, some with hemp and others with rum, and with the bayonet on their guns marched off in quest of the *Children*. But the *Children* were innumerable

and invincible ; Captain Thomas's soldiers were hewn down by them like crops by the scythe and his ears were dinned with loud shouts of *Hari, Hari.*

Chapter II

The Company had many silk-factories at the time and one of them was situated at Sibagram. Mr. Donniworth was the factor or manager of the factory. The Company made excellent arrangements for the safety of these factories in those days, and it was for this that Mr. Donniworth somehow contrived to keep his head on his shoulders. He had to send away his wife and children to Calcutta, however, and was himself sorely pressed by the *Children*. Captain Thomas came to this spot with a few companies of his soldiers about this time. A rabble of low-class rustics, encouraged by the enthusiasm of the *Children*, had interested themselves in the work of despoiling people of their wealth and they once fell upon Captain Thomas's commissariat. Cartloads of *ghee*, flour, poultry, rice and other food-stuffs passing by the way had tickled their appetite beyond control and they therefore attacked the carts ; but a few blows from the guns in the hands of the sepoys were enough to disperse them. Captain Thomas instantly sent a report to Calcutta that with 157 sepoys he had that day worsted a company of 14,700 rebels of whom 2,153 were killed, 1,233 wounded and 7 taken prisoners,—the last item alone being irreproachably veracious. The Captain himself thought that he had fought and won a second Blenheim or Rossbach ; he twirled up his moustaches and walked about, majestically intrepid. He advised Donni-

worth that the rebellion had been quelled and that there was nothing left for him to do but to send for his wife and children from Calcutta. Donniworth promised he would do it, but he had better stay there for some time and let the country quiet down a little more. Donniworth had a farm full of sheep and chicken, and stores replenished with excellent cheese. His table always groaned under the load of all sorts of wild fowl, and his bearded cook was a second Draupadi in the culinary art. So, Captain Thomas did not waste much breath and stayed on there.

Bhavananda on the other hand was fuming with rage and looking forward to the day when he might have access to the title of a second *sambharari* by cutting off the head of this Captain Thomas. The *Children* did not know that the English had come to India for its salvation. How could they, indeed ! Even Englishmen of Captain Thomas's time did not know it. It was then only in the mind of Providence that it should be so. Bhavananda thought he would pluck out this crop of demons, root and branch, when they would get together and be off their guard. In the meanwhile the *Children* stayed aloof, and, innocent of anxiety, Captain Thomas set himself to appreciating the skill of the new *chef*.

The Captain loved sport immensely, and would from time to time ride with Mr. Donniworth in quest of game round the woods near Sivagram. One day, he had been out hunting with Mr. Donniworth, follow-

ed by a company of huntsmen. To tell the truth, Captain Thomas was fearless, and for boldness and strength he was an example even to Englishmen. The wood teemed with tigers, buffaloes, bears and other wild beasts. After some distance was passed the huntsmen refused to go further and said there was no way further on. Donniworth had once been encountered by such a tiger in the woods that he too was not inclined to go further. They were for turning back, but the Captain said : " You may return, but I won't." So he entered the depths of the forest alone. In fact there was no way into it. The horse could not proceed further, but the Captain left it, walked alone into the woods with a gun in hand and looked about for a tiger. He did not find any tiger, but who was there sitting under a huge tree covered over with flowery creepers ? It was a young devotee who lit up the woods with the charm of her person. It seemed as if the blooming flowers grew more fragrant by the touch of that heavenly body. The Captain was surprised, but his surprise was followed by wrath. He knew the native dialect fairly well, and, in his queer accents, asked in vernacular " Who are you ? "

The devotee answered : " I am a devotee."

" You are a rebel," answered the captain, unable to express his sense in vernacular.

" What is that ? " enquired the ascetic.

" I will shoot you down," said the captain in his broken accents.

" Do so," said the Sannyasi.

The captain was hesitating whether he would shoot the ascetic or not, when suddenly the young devotee sprung upon him and snatched away his gun and plucked the deerskin off and threw away the false braids from the head, and, lo! Captain Thomas saw before him the figure of a beautiful woman. The lady smiled and said : " Saheb, I am a woman and do not mean to hurt anybody, but I would like to ask you one thing. The fight is between Hindus and Mussulmans, why do you come between them ? You had better go back home."

" Who are you," enquired Thomas.

" You see I am a female devotee and a wife of some one of those you have come to fight with."

" Would you stay in my house ? "

" What ! as your mistress ? "

" No, you may stay like a wife, but there won't be a marriage."

" I too have something to ask ; we had a monkey in our house which has died of late, leaving its cage empty. I will present to you a chain for your waist, will you come and stay in its place ? We have got excellent plantains in our gardens ! "

" You are a very ' spirited ' woman," said the captain, in a mixed language. " I am very much pleased with your courage. Come to my house. Your husband will die in the fight ; what will happen to you then ? "

" Very well, let us come to an agreement. The fight will be over in a few days. If you win I agree to

stay as your mistress, that is, if I live. But if we win then, well, would you come and take the place of our monkey and eat plantains ? ”

“ Plantains are good to eat,” said the captain, “ have you got any with you ? ”

“ Go to,” said Santi, “ take thy gun and be off ; what a pity one has got to speak to such a race of savages.”

Santi gave him his gun and went away smiling.

Chapter III

When Santi left the Captain, she disappeared in the woods nimbly like a doe. Presently the Captain heard the following song sung by a woman :—

The roaring tide youth is in
Who's there can stem it, O !
O Lord of creation, 'tis Thou,
The demon *Mura's* foe !

Again the melodious strains of a *sarang* sang from somewhere else :

"The roaring tide of youth is in
Who's there can stem it, O !
O Lord of creation, 'tis Thou,
The demon *Mura's* foe !

With it mingled too a man's voice which sang :

The roaring tide youth is in
Who's there can stem it O !
O Lord of creation, 'tis Thou,
The demon *Mura's* foe !
The storm it blows on water high
My frigate dances lo,
The steerer ably guides her course ;
O Lord, O *Mura's* foe !
The wall of sands I'll wash away
And ease my longing Soul,
A current who can ever stop,
When tidal waters roll
O Lord ! O *Mura's* foe !

The *sarang* too sang in the same strain :

"A current who can ever stop
When tidal waters roll ?"

Santi entered the wood where it was the thickest,— so much dark it was that you could not know who was

within if you stood outside. There stood a little cottage here wholly concealed by the dense foliage. The walls were made by branches of trees intertwined with creepers, the roof was of leaves, and the floor of wood covered with a thick crust of earth. Santi entered it after opening the door made of creepers. There sat Jivananda playing on the *sarang*. As he saw Santi, he asked : " Has the tide set in the stream after all ? "

Santi smiled and said, " Does the tide ever enter a pond or a drain ? "

Jivananda grew gloomy and said, " Santi, my life is gone for the transgression of one day. I shall have to expiate for my sin one day. I would have done it before this, but I have desisted only at your request. But a great battle surely looks ahead, and I will have to make my expiation on the field of that battle. My life I must give up, but on the day of death." —

Santi interrupted him and said : " I am your wife, the participator in your pieties and a helper in the noble work you have undertaken. You have taken a very great vow and I have left my home only to aid you in that great work. We have changed our home for the woods only that we might perform that great duty together. I shall add to your piety and not stand in the way of your success in the world of devotion. Marriage is not for this life alone but for the life hereafter. As for the marriage of this life, let us think that there never was such a thing between us. Our marriage is all for the life hereafter and I am sure we will reap a double

harvest in the life to come. But why talk of expiation ? Of what sin are you guilty ? You pledged yourself not to sit on the same seat with a woman. You have never done *that*. What then are you to expiate ? My lord and tutor, everything I have learnt from you, what can I teach *you* ? You are a hero ; is it for me to teach you the duty of one ? ”

Jivananda was very glad to hear all this and said “But you *have* indeed taught me something !”

Beaming with pleasure, Santi added, “ Now, look at the other side and say if our marriage has been really vain even on this side of the grave ? You love me and I love you—what greater bliss can marriage give us in our earthly life ? Cry then ‘Hail, mother’ and be happy.”

They then joined their voices and sang together the great hymn of the Motherland.

Chapter IV

One of these days Bhavananda went to town. He forsook the broad thoroughfares and proceeded by one of its dingy lanes. On its two sides rose high buildings which effectually obstructed the sun who only peeped into it once at noon ; for the rest of the day darkness held its sway. Bhavananda entered one of the two-storied houses on the lane and went straight into a room in the ground-floor where a middle-aged woman was engaged in cooking. The woman was middle-aged, dark and plump, with a widow's white cloth on. Her forehead was tattooed and over it her hair was dressed into a puff. Tong, tong, rang the pan when struck with the stick with which she stirred the rice and her hair whistled as she gurgled on, talking to herself ; her puffed hair waved in all manner of ways with the grimaces that she was making. It was when she was thus engaged that Bhavananda entered the room and hailed her, " My morning's obeisance, grandam ! "

The " grandam," when she saw Bhavananda, hastily set herself to adjusting her dress. She once thought of throwing open the knot on her head but could not manage it, for her hand was not free at that time. Her next thought was to cover the lock of hair—shining with oil and decked with a *bok* flower, which she had placed on it when worshipping ;—but the cloth could not help her in the matter, for the length of the cloth she wore

did not exceed five cubits. In rounding her capacious waist it was almost run out. Then again the nakedness of the body had also to be covered with it. Thus far the cloth would go, but on reaching the shoulder it refused to go further, and when the ear was reached it absolutely stood still. So the very modest Gouri Thakurani had to content herself with holding the skirt of her cloth near the ear and, resolving to provide herself in future with cloths 8 cubits long, she answered, "Hallo, Gossain, come, come ; but why do you bow to me ?"

"Bah," said Bhavananda, "you are my grandam !" "You like to call me so, that's all. You are a *gossain*, a god on earth. However, what you've done, you've done, may you live long. And in truth you may bow to me, if you choose, for in any case I am older than you."

In fact Gouri Devi was senior to Bhavananda by about a quarter of a century but the clever Bhavananda answered, "No, grandam ! I call you so because you are so droll, and don't you know when we made the calculation you proved to be six years my junior ? You know we Vaishnavas can do all sorts of things. I have the intention to remarry you one day with the permission of the head of our abbey."

"For shame, you must not say that," said Gouri, "you know I am a widow."

"Then there won't be a remarriage ?"

"Do what you think best, you are a wise man and I am a poor woman—what can I know ? Well, when is it going to take place then ?"

Bhavananda suppressed his mirth with difficulty and answered, "Not one day later than I see the *Brahma-charî*; and—er—well how is she?"

Gouri was disappointed. She suspected that the talk of her remarriage was all a joke, and answered, "Well how? She is as she ever is."

"You just go and see how she is," said Bhavananda, "and tell her that I have come and wish to see her once."

Gouri Devi then left the cooking stick, washed her hands and climbed the steep stairs up to the first floor. In a room here and seated on a torn mat was a rare beauty. But upon her charm there was a very dark shadow;—a shadow like that of the dark cloud over a stream at mid-day,—smiling and bright, great and full to overflowing, and rolling with deep water. Waves are merrily cast up, ashore the flowery trees wave with the breeze and droop with their blooming burden, the mansions on the bank are shining too; the water is moved in billows by the passing boats;—the hour is mid-day; still all its beauties are overcast with gloom for the shadow of the dark cloud.—So too was she! Her smooth, dark and dense hair flowed gleefully as before; there were in her open and full forehead, as before, the eyelashes looking like things painted with a rare brush; as before, shone her blooming bright and watery eyes adorned with a shining black spot,—not so wistful in glance nor so restless, but a little softer than before. The crimson on her lips shone as before, her full breast

heaved with her breath as usual, and her arms owned a softness that is the despair of the sylvan creeper as it did of old. But there was not that gloss, nor the sharpness, nor the brightness, nor the briskness and not that charm nor, it would seem, even that youth. Beauty and sweetness alone seemed to have been triumphant, and patience and gravity were now added to her features. If you had ever seen her before you would have no doubt thought that she was a matchless beauty on earth ; if you saw her now you would take her for a goddess of heaven born on earth under a ban. Round her lay scattered a few antique books on the floor, on the wall hung a set of beads to assist her in chanting *Harinam*, and, here and there, there were pictures of Jagannath, of the chastisement of Kaliya and on other subjects connected with Srikrishna's life in Brindaban. Bhavananda entered that room and asked : "Kalyani, are you well ?" "Will you never cease inquiring that of me ?" retorted Kalyani. "What is it to you whether I am well or ill ? And what is it to me too ?"

"He who plants a tree waters it daily and finds pleasure in its growth. I planted life in your dead body, why should I not now ask whether it is growing ?"

"Does a poison tree ever cease to live ?"

"Is life a poison ?"

"Why else did I seek to destroy it with nectar ?"

"I have often thought of asking you one question but have not dared to do it so long. Who was it that made your life a curse ?"

"No one made my life a curse," answered Kalyani quietly. "Life itself is a curse. So is my life, so is yours, so is everybody's life."

"True, Kalyani, my life has been a curse ever since. Have you finished your grammar?"

"No."

"The Lexicon?"

"I have no liking for it."

"I saw you before eager in learning, why have you grown so indifferent now?"

"When a great *savant* like you is such a wicked man, it is best not to become learned. Have you got any news of my husband, sire?"

"Why do you ask me that again and again? He is practically dead to you."

"I am dead to him but not he to me."

"You tried to die that he might be as dead to you. Why then do you ask the question over and over again?"

"Our relation does not end with death. Tell me, how is he?"

"He is well."

"Where is he? At Padachinha?"

"Yes."

"What is he doing?"

"He is doing what he has been doing for some time past—building a fort and manufacturing arms. With the arms which he has produced, thousands of *Children* have armed themselves. By his industry he has left us no more in want of cannons and muskets, powder and

shot. He is now the foremost among the *Children*, he is our right hand."

"Could he have done all this if he did not know that I was dead? Can anybody swim across this ocean of a world who has got a pitcherful of mud tied to his neck? Can he run who has got iron chains on his legs? O, Sannyasi, why did you save this wretched life of mine?"

"A wife is the participator in her husband's duties and an aid to their performance."

"That applies to the humdrum duties of life, but in all high and noble works the wife is a thorn on her husband's path. A thorn is drawn out by a thorn alone, they say. I sought to pluck the thorn of his failure in duty by the thorn of poison. For shame, you wretched and sinful ascetic, why did you give me back my life?"

"Well, let what I have given remain mine. Kalyani, could you give me back the life that I have given you?"

"Do you know how my daughter Sukumari is?"

"I have not heard of her for a long time. Jivananda has not gone that way for a long time."

K. Could you not get me news of her? My husband I must give up, but, if I have lived, why should I give up my daughter too? If I get back Sukumari, even in this hapless life of mine, I may yet then have some joy. But no, why should you do all this for me?"

B. I will do it for you, Kalyani, I will get you your child, but what then?

K. What then?

B. What of your husband?

K. I have willingly given him up ?
 B. But if his mission is fulfilled ?
 K. I shall be his again. Does he know that I live.
 B. No.
 K. Do you not meet him ?
 B. I do.
 K. Do you speak nothing of me.
 B. No, the husband has no relation with a wife
 who is supposed to be dead.

K. What do you say ?

B. You have been re-born and may marry again.

Kalyani had so far retained her attitude of reverence towards Bhavananda, but now she changed it to the familiar 'thou' and said, "Get me my daughter."

"I will ; you may marry again."

"Thyself, should I marry ?"

"Say, will you marry ?"

"Well, marry thee ?"

"What if it comes to that ?"

"What will then be of the *vow* you have taken ?"

"It will go in the depths of the sea."

"This noble mission ?"

"The same way."

"For what would you throw up all these ?"

"For *you*, Kalyani. Remember this that no one can keep his passions under control,—be he a man, a *rishi*, a *siddha* or a god. The vow of the *Children* is my very life, but, I say it for the first time, you are greater far than my life. From the moment I revived you, I have been sold

to your charms. I did not know that there was ever such a beauty on earth. If I knew that I would have to meet with such a beauty, I would never have adopted the *Children's creed*. In the fire of thy beauty the creed gets burnt to ashes. My religion has been consumed by thy charms, only life exists. Even the life itself has been burning out these four years. Kalyani, I am daily passing through an ordeal of fire—I am being scalded through and through. But the fuel for the fire is all but run out. My days now can be numbered. I have borne it for four years, I cannot bear it any more. Kalyani, will you be mine?"

K. "I have heard from your lips that it is a rule of the *Children's creed* that he who is swayed by passions has got to expiate the sin by death. Is it true?"

"It is."

"Then you have to expiate this by death?"

"Yes, that is the only expiation possible."

"Will you die if I fulfil your desire?"

"Yes, I will."

"If I don't?"

"Even then I must die, for my heart has been a slave to the passions."

"I will *not* satisfy thy desire; when will thou die?"

"In the coming fight."

"Then get thee gone," said Kalyani, "will you send me my daughter?" With tears in his eyes, Bhavananda answered "I will; but tell me, will you remember me when I am dead."

"Yes, I will remember you as a sinner and as one who had transgressed his *vow*."

Bhavananda left and Kalyani sat down to read her book again.

Chapter V

Bhavananda walked towards the Abbey in a contemplative mood. Night overtook him on the way. He was alone on the way, alone did he enter the forest, but he now found that some one else walked before him. "Who is that?" enquired Bhavananda.

The man who walked before him answered: "I could answer if you knew how to ask the question."

"Hail," said Bhavananda.

"Mother," came the reply.

"I am Bhavananda Goswami."

"I am Dhirananda."

"Dhirananda, where had you been?"

"In quest of yourself."

"Why?"

"To have a word with you."

"About what?"

"It should be spoken in private."

"This is a very lonely place, you may say here what you have got to say."

"You went to town?"

"Yes."

"To Gouri Devi's place?"

"Did you go there too?"

"A very beautiful damsel lives there?"

Bhavananda was a little startled, a little afraid.
"What do you mean by all this?" he asked.

" You went to see her ? "

" Well, and then ? "

" You are greatly enamoured of the damsel."

Bhavananda mused a while and said : " Dhirananda, why did you seek to know so much ? Every word of what you say is true. How many other than yourself know it ? "

" No one but myself."

" Then I can save my good name only if I kill you ? "

" You can."

" Then come let us fight in this solitude. Either I shall kill you and be easy myself or you will kill me and make an end of all my troubles. Are you armed ? "

" Certainly ; who would dare talk to you of these things unarmed ? If fight be your object, I am in for it. A fight between two *Children* is forbidden, but there is no prohibition against fighting for self-defence. But would it not be much better to begin the fight after I have said all that I had to say ? "

" There's no harm in that ; go on," said Bhavananda, and taking his sword out of the scabbard placed it on Dhirananda's shoulder, lest he should fly.

" I was going to say, you had better marry Kalyani," said Dhirananda.

" Kalyani ! You even know the name ? "

" Why don't you marry her ? "

" She has got a husband."

" Oh, Vaishnava's do marry like that ! "

" That is for the low-class men and not for the *Children*—a *Child* can never marry."

"Is the *Child's* creed such as you can't renounce? —Dont you see, you are dying—Oh! for shame, my shoulder is cut up" (in fact blood was flowing from his shoulders).

"With what object have you come to instigate me to sin? You must have some interest in doing so," said Bhavananda.

"What is that I will tell you—Don't drive your sword into my body—I'll tell you. This *Child's* vow has sorely troubled me—I am sick of it. I want to renounce it and pass my days in the pleasant company of my wife and children. But I cannot be staying safely at home. Many know me to be a rebel. So soon as I am at my house, either the officers of the State will cut off my head or the *Children* themselves will kill me as a traitor. I therefore want to take you with me."

"Well, why me?"

"That is the kernel of the whole affair. The *Children* are all under your command. Satyananda is not here [and in his absence you are their leader. If you begin the fight with these soldiers, I am sure you will win. When you have won, you had better establish your own kingdom, for the soldiers will do your bidding. You will then be the king and Kalyani may be your Mandadari; and I, as your humble follower, may happily pass my days in the company of my darlings and bless you. Sink the *Child's* creed in the depths of the deepest sea."

Bhavananda slowly took off the sword from Dhira-

nanda's shoulder and said : " Dhirananda, prepare for fight, I shall kill you. I may have been a slave of passion but I am not a traitor. You have asked me to be a traitor and are yourself one. I shall not incur the sin of killing a Brahmin by killing a thing like you. I will kill you."

Before he had finished, Dhirananda ran away as fast as his legs would carry him. Bhavananda did not follow him, for he was abstracted for a while and when he looked for him Dhirananda was to be seen nowhere.

Chapter VI

Instead of going to the Abbey, Bhavananda retired into the depths of the wood. There were ruins of a very old building in the woods. Shrubs had grown profusely on the ruins and the place had become the abode of numberless snakes. One part of the ruins was clearer and less worn than the rest, and Bhavananda sat upon this spot and began to think.

The night was very dark. The wood too was very large and lonely, very dense and, for the thickly placed trees and shrubs, impenetrable even by wild beasts. It was vast, lonely, dark, impenetrable and silent. The only sounds in it were the occasional roar of the tiger or the grim yell of a beast of prey crying for hunger or in fear or rage. At times there was the sound of the beating of a big bird's wings and at other times of the footsteps of the beasts, pursuing and the pursued, preying and preyed upon. Seated on the ruined building in that lonely darkness was Bhavananda musing alone. The world did not then exist for him or existed only as the home of fear. He was thinking with his hand on his forehead ;—he did not move or breathe for fear and was immersed in deep thought. He was saying to himself : "What is to be, must be. My only regret is that I should have been swept away by a torrent of passion like the petty elephant before

the Bhagirathi.* The body may come to dust in a moment and with it the senses,—and I have been borne away by these! Death is best for me now—breaker of a vow that I am. Die! fie! why shall I die?" Just at that time the owl grimly screeched overhead. Bhavananda then spoke out: "What's that? It sounded in my ears as a call from Death. I do not know who made the sound, who called me, who gave me the advice, who bade me die! Infinity! Thou art full of sounds, but I know not the meaning of thy voice. Give me a mind to do my duty, keep me away from sin. Oh, my Master! bless me, that I may ever walk in the path of Duty."

Then, from the woods, a deep and sweet human voice cried out, "I bless thee, thou shall ever walk on the path of duty."

Bhavananda shuddered. "What is that," he cried, "it is my Master's voice. Maharaj, where are you, come before your slave in his distress."

But no one appeared, no one made a reply. Bhavananda called again and again but no answer came. He looked about on all sides but no one was there.

Bhavananda returned to the Abbey at about dawn. The morning sun washed the green leaves on the top

* This refers to the legend that when the holy Ganges or the Bhagirathi was rushing down the plains, following her guide Bhagirath, a huge elephant who was much puffed up with pride took it into its head to stop the flow of the current. It therefore stood in front of the torrent, prepared to fight, and was carried away like a straw.

of the forest with light. He heard the song '*Hare Murare*' and knew it was Satyananda's voice that was singing it. He knew then that the Master had returned.

Chapter VII

When Jivananda went out of the cottage, Santi softly sang again to the accompaniment of the *sarang* :

When Deluge sank the worlds,
On the water endless
Vedas Thou didst uphold
Like a frigate fearless.
O Lord of Worlds that wore
The form of Fish of yore.

When the melodious measures of Jaideva chanted by Santi Devi, with proper tune and time, stirred the deep silence of that endless wood into a sweetness like that of the tiny billows of a full-swollen river stirred by the soft breeze of spring, she sang on :

The sacrifice of blood
Bid by the Word timeless
Blaming in mercy didst
Stop bloodshed relentless.
O Lord of Worlds that wore
Great Buddha's form of yore.

Then somebody sang in a deep voice from outside :—

To lay the *Mleccha* low
With sword relentless
Rushing like comet dread
Bringing bloodshed endless
O Lord of Worlds that will
Kalki's dread career fill.

Santi bowed down with reverence, took the dust of Satyananda's feet, and said ; "My Master, what merit should I have acquired that I should meet you here ? Command me what I am to do." Then with a stroke on the *sarang* she sang again,

Believe me low, lord ! at thy feet
And bless, that I have good that's meet !

"Good will be thy share, mother," said Satyananda.

"How, Sire," returned Santi, "By your command I am doomed to widowhood."

"I did not know you then, Mother. I did not realise the strength of the string when I pulled so hard. You are wiser than I am, you must find a way out of this scrape. Do not tell Jivananda that I know everything. For your sake he has saved his life so long, and he may save it longer yet. If he does that my object will be gained."

There was a flash of rage in those large, blue and blooming eyes, like the flash of lightning in the midnight clouds. "Why, Sire!" Santi retorted, "I and my husband are but one soul. I shall certainly tell him everything that has passed between you and me. He may die, if he must. There would be no harm done to me, for I shall die with him. He has got a Heaven to go to, is it?—So have I."

The Celebrate answered, "I have never been worsted before, like this, but I confess my defeat to you to-day. Mother, I am your child.—Be kind to your child; save Jivananda's life, save yours, and my object will be gained."

This time the lightning smiled in her face. "My husband's duty is entirely in his hands," said Santi; "who am I that I should stand in the way of its performance? In this world the husband is the god of the

wife, but in the life beyond Duty is everybody's God. To me my husband is very great, but greater is my duty, and greater still to me is my husband's Duty. I may forsake my duty if I will, but stand in the way of my husband's piety?—No, Maharaj, that shall never be. My husband may die at your command—I will not stop him."

With a long-drawn sigh the Brahmacharin replied : "Mother, sacrifice there must be in this great work of ours. Every one of us will have to be sacrificed. I shall die ; Jivananda, Bhavananda and every body else will die ; you too, mother, may die. But think of this, that it is best to die after doing some work. Why should we die without doing any great work? I have never yet called anybody mother save my country. No one but this well-watered land of ours, rich in dainty fruits, is a mother to us. And now I call *you* my mother. As a mother, you must do your work. Take care, by all means, that the great object is gained. Save Jivananda's life and save yours."

So saying Satyananda went out singing the glory of the Lord.

Chapter VIII

The news spread among the *Children* that Satyananda had come back and that he had called them together as he had some communication to make to them. Then the community began to assemble in companies. Ten thousand *Children* assembled under a sky against which were set Mango, Jack, Palm, Tamarind, Banian, Peepul, Simul and other trees. They then heard from one another that Satyananda had returned, and made a great hullabaloo for joy. People did not know where Satyananda had gone and why. The rumour was that he had gone to the Himalayas to pray for the good of the *Children*. They now began to whisper, "The Maharaja has succeeded in his prayer and the kingdom will now be ours." At this there was a great noise. Some one cried out, "Kill, kill the shaven knolls?" Some said "Victory to the Maharaj!" Some cried out "Hari, Murari." Others sang "Hail, Mother." One would say, "Brother, is the day really coming when, wretched Bengalees that we are, we shall be able to lay down our lives on the battlefield?" Another would say, "Brother, would the day come when we shall be able to break the mosque to raise the temple of Radha-Madhava in its place?" "Will the day come," another said, "when we ourselves shall enjoy our wealth?" The murmur of ten thousand tongues then mingled with the rustle of leaves waved by the pleasant breeze and

the soft rumble of the rivulet running on its bed of sands. There was also the green wood, the green earth, the limpid stream running by, the white sandbed spread out and blooming flowers smiling. At intervals rose the song "Hail, mother," so pleasing to everybody.

Satyananda then appeared and stood before the assembly of the *Children*. The heads of ten thousand *Children* were forthwith lowered to the ground, illumined by the moonbeams straggling through interstices of the leaves. With his hands raised to the sky and with tears glistening in his eyes, Satyananda spoke at the top of his voice : "The Lord of Baikuntha, who wears the garland of wild flowers and holds the Conch, the Disc, the Club and the Lotus, who killed the demon Kesi and slew Madhu, Mur and Naraka, May He bless you, give you strength in your arms, devotion in your heart and inspire you to piety. You just sing His glory first."

Then the ten thousands voices sang :—

"When deluge sank the worlds,
On the water endless,
Vedas thou didst uphold
Like a frigate fearless.—
O Lord of worlds that wore
The form of Fish of Yore."

Satyananda blessed them again and said : " *Children*, to-day I have something particular to tell you. An unbeliever and miscreant named Thomas has killed many of our flock. Tonight we shall destroy him with his entire force. This is the Lord's command—what say you to this?"

A tremendous uproar rent the sky with shouts of "Hari, Hari." Echoes were heard from distant hills. "We'll kill them even now, show us where they are." "Kill, kill, kill the enemy," went the cry. Satyananda then said: "But we have to possess our souls in patience for the purpose. The enemy has got cannon, and without cannons we can never hope to fight with them. Besides they are a heroic race. Seventeen guns will reach us today from the Fort of Padachinha; when they come we shall march to fight. Look, the day is dawning, when it is four dandas we shall—What's that?"

"Boom-oom-om" suddenly roared the guns on all sides of the vast wood. It was the artillery of Captain Thomas. He had arranged to surround the army of *Children* in this mango grove and kill them like fishes in a net.

Chapter IX

"Boom-oom-oom-oom," roared the English guns. The vast forest shook with the sound and echoed back "boom-oom-oom-oom." Meandering through the banks of the river was echoed from the distant horizon the sound "boom-oom-oom-oom." It entered the other forest beyond the stream and sounded there "boom-oom-oom-oom." Satyananda ordered, "come one to see whose guns they are." Some *Children* instantly jumped on horses and went about to see; but no sooner had they come to some distance out of the woods than cannon balls were showered on them like the rain drops of Sravan and they all fell with their horses. Satyananda saw all this from a distance. "Mount a lofty tree," he said, "and see what it is." Before he said this, Jivananda had done so and was watching in the light of dawn. From a high branch he shouted downwards, "It is the English gun."

"Infantry or Cavalry," asked Satyananda.

"Both."

"How many are they?"

"Can't guess, they are still coming out of the woods."

"Only sepoy? or are there Europeans too?"

"There are Europeans."

Satyananda then asked Jivananda to come down from the tree, which he did.

"There are ten thousand *Children* present today, and you are their general for the day. See what you can do with them." Jivananda got himself fully armed and jumped on his horse. Only once he cast a glance on Nabinananda Goswami, and by it signified something to him which none could understand. Nor could any body know what Nabinananda answered with a glance ; only they knew between themselves that very likely that was their last meeting this side of the grave. Then Nabinananda raised his right hand and said : "Brothers, sing now the glory of the Lord."

Then the ten thousand *Children*, with thousands of arms uplifted, sang with one voice, resounding the woods and the sky and drowning the roar of cannons :—

"To lay the Mleccha low
With sword relentless"—

At this time the shower of the English balls began to fall on the woods and among the *Children's* force. Some fell singing, with their head or hand or heart pierced, but no one stopped singing.

When the song was finished every one was still. The dense forest, the sand bed of the river, and that infinite loneliness,—all was plunged into deep silence. Only the dreadful roar of cannons, the murmur of the distant soldiers' voices, the rustle of their arms and their heavy tread occasionally disturbed the silence.

Then Satyananda shouted forth : "Hari, the Lord of Universe, will help you—how far are the guns ?"

Some one answered from above : "Very near the wood, only beyond a small field."

"Who are you," asked Satyananda.

"I am Nabinananda," came the answer from above.

Then Satyananda said, "You are ten thousand and you must win. Go and seize the guns."

Then Jivananda who rode before said, "Come."

The ten thousand *Children*, infantry and cavalry, followed Jivananda. The foot-soldier carried a musket on his shoulder, a sword by his side and a spear in his hand. So soon as they came out, they were shattered by a profuse shower of bullets. Numerous *Children* fell to the ground without a fight. Some one said to Jivananda : "What's the use of killing people without the chance of a fight ?"

Jivananda turned round and saw it was Bhavananda. He asked, "What do you want me to do now?"

"Let us defend ourselves from the woods under the shelter of the trees. Without a gun, our army will not stand for one moment the shower of bullets in open space. But we can keep up the fight pretty long from behind the wood."

J. You are right, no doubt, but our master has ordered that the cannon must be seized.

B. No one can do that. But if it must be done, you had better stay ; I will go.

J. That cannot be, Bhavananda, to-day I am to die.

B. It is I that must die to-day.

J. I must make my expiation.

B. You are sinless—you have nothing to expiate. I have a guilty mind. I will have to die. You had better stay and let me go.

J. I do not know what sin you are guilty of. But I know this that if you live the *Children's* mission will be fulfilled. Let me go.

Bhavananda was silent for a while and said: Today will I die if there is need; I will die whenever the necessity arises. There is not a good and a bad time for death.

J. Then come.

After this Bhavananda advanced and stood at the head of the army. At that time showers of cannon balls were working havoc in the ranks of the army of the *Children*,—cutting them to pieces, tearing them and throwing them overhead. Besides, the sepoys with their guns laid rows of *Children* low with a sure aim. "Into this fire have the *Children* to jump today," said Bhavananda. "Comrades, sing now, who can, "Hail mother." Then thousands of *Children* sang aloud "Hail, Mother" in the deep strains of the *Meghmallar* tune and to the time of the cannon's roar.

Chapter X

The army of ten thousand *Children* advanced swiftly upon the artillery with their spears up, singing 'Hail, Mother.' They were killed in numbers and rent asunder, terribly suffering from the incessant shower of cannon balls ; but still they did not turn back. Presently a body of sepoy charged them with their bayonets on their right flank under the orders of Captain Thomas. Attacked from both sides the *Children* then gave up all hopes. Hundreds of them were being killed at every moment. Jivananda then said, "Bhavananda, you are right. There is no need for the massacre of more Vaishnavas. Let us slowly retire."

"How can you retire now ? Whoever turns back now will die."

"We have been attacked on the front and in the right flank, there is nothing on the left. Come let us turn round and retire by the left."

"Where could you retire ? Don't you know there is a river that side which has been swelled by the rains ? Do you mean to drown the army of *Children* in the river ?"

"But there is a bridge on it, I think."

"If ten thousand soldiers were to cross by that bridge, they would make such a hopeless rush that, I am sure, with one gun the enemy could easily destroy our whole army."

"Do one thing ; you keep a few of them with you. From the courage and tact which you have shown in the fight, I am sure, nothing would be impossible for you. You may keep the enemy engaged with this small force, and, under the cover of your force, I may take the rest across the river. Those who stay with you are sure to die. Those who come with me may be saved."

"Very well, I shall do so." So saying Bhavananda again charged the English artillery with two thousand soldiers with great energy, lustily shouting, "Hail, Mother." A fierce fight raged there, but the small army of *Children* could not stand long before the artillery. The gunners mowed them down like ripe crop.

In the meantime Jivananda, with the rest of the *Children* turned slightly to the left and rounding the wood marched on to the bridge. Lieutenant Watson, an assistant of Thomas, saw from a distance that a body of *Children* were slowly retiring. He therefore quickly followed them with a company of Foujdari sepoys and a company of Pergunnah sepoys.

Captain Thomas saw this. Seeing that the main body of *Children* were flying away, he said to an officer named Captain Hay : "With two or three hundred sepoys I shall slay these rebels here, you just follow them there with the guns and the rest of the force. Lieutenant Watson goes by the right, you attack them from the left ; but the access to the bridge must be blocked first ; when that is done we can surround them on three sides and kill them like birds in a net.

Remember you have to deal with swift-footed native troops, with whom retreating is the strongest point. You cannot easily reach them by following ; so you had better despatch your cavalry by a round-about way to block the bridge. That will finish the business."

Captain Hay went out with Thomas' orders.

"Lanka fell for the pride of its ruler," they say. Captain Thomas in his supreme scorn for the *Children* kept only two hundred of the infantry with him to fight Bhavananda and sent away the rest with Hay. The clever Bhavananda saw that the English guns and the major part of their forces were gone and found that what remained of it might be easily destroyed. He then called out such of his troops as yet survived and said : "We have got to go and help Jivananda after slaying these few soldiers. Comrades, cry again, Victory to Hari, the Lord of Universe." The handful of the *Children* then cried "Victory to Hari, Lord of Universe" and fell on Captain Thomas like tigers. The handful of sepoys and Telingis could not stand the fury of that attack and fell. Bhavananda himself then jumped on Captain Thomas and caught him by his hair. He had been fighting to the last.

Bhavananda said, "Captain Saheb, we shall not kill you ; the English are not our enemies. But why did you come in as friends of the Mussulmans? Come, I shall save your life, and for the present you are my prisoner. We wish all joy to Englishmen, we are your friends."

Captain Thomas then tried to raise a gun mounted with a bayonet to kill Bhavananda, but Bhavananda had caught him like a tiger and he could not move. Then at Bhavananda's command two or three *Children* bound him down. Bhavananda said, "Take him on a horse and let us go to the aid of Jivananda."

Then the few soldiers tied Captain Thomas to a horse and ran after Lieutenant Watson, crying "Hail, Mother."

The *Children* under Jivananda were demoralised and were about to fly. Jivananda and Dhirananda expected them to keep them to the ranks. But they could not manage everybody. Some fled to take shelter in the mango grove. The rest of the soldiers Jivananda and Dhirananda took to the bridge. But there Hay and Watson attacked them from two sides and it seemed to be all over with them.

Chapter XI

At this time Thomas's guns reached the right flank and made havoc among the *Children* ;—there was no hope of anybody escaping. Most of the *Children* fled where they could. Jivananda and Dhirananda tried their best to keep them together in form but to no avail. At that time somebody cried out, “ To the bridge, to the bridge ! cross the river or you will be drowned ! Go to the bridge with your face towards the English army.”

Jivananda looked forward and saw Bhavananda before him. Bhavananda said to Jivananda, “ Go to the bridge or there is no hope.” Then their army slowly backed to the bridge. On reaching the bridge, too many *Children* rushed for it at the same time and gave a great opportunity to the English guns which began to sweep the bridge. The *Children* were killed in large numbers. Bhavananda, Dhirananda and Jivananda were together. One gun in particular was working much ruin among the *Children* and at Bhavananda’s command they then rushed on this gun and after a fierce fight captured it. Bhavananda then stood on the gun and cried, “ Say, ‘Hail, Mother,’ ” and they echoed his cry. Bhavananda then said : “ Jivananda, come let us turn this gun and make a pulp of these rogues like the flour pulp for *luchi*.” The *Children* turned the gun round and it then roared with a noise that sounded like “ Hari, Hari,” in the ears of the Vaishnavas. It killed many sepoys. Bhavananda

dragged the gun to the mouth of the bridge and, after placing it there, asked Dhirananda and Jivananda to take the *Children* across the river by the bridge. Twenty choice *Children* only remained with him to cover their retreat.

Then innumerable *Children* crossed the bridge under the command of Jivananda and Dhirananda. Bhavananda alone with twenty *Children* killed many of the enemy's soldiers with one gun. But they were like the innumerable waves thrown up by the wind. They surrounded Bhavananda, pressed him and almost drowned him with their numbers. Bhavananda was unwearied, invincible and intrepid—he killed numbers of soldiers at each roar of the cannon. The infidel force made sallies on him like waves propelled by storm but the twenty *Children* effectually stopped access to the bridge with the gun. They did not die even when it seemed they must—and the infidels could not enter the bridge. Those heroes were invincible and, it would seem, immortal. The army of *Children* made good use of the opportunity to cross to the other side of the stream in large numbers. A little time more and they would all safely reach the other side! But just then was heard, whence they knew not, a roar of fresh guns. Both parties suspended the fight for a moment and looked where the guns might be. They found that out of the woods came out some guns manipulated by native gunners. On coming out, that great line of guns showered fire on the troops of Captain Hay, throwing out clouds of smoke from

their seventeen mouths. The woods and the hills all resounded with the deep roar. The infidel force, weary with fighting all day, shuddered for fear of their lives. Telingis, Mussulmans, up-country men, all fled before the fire ; only a few white soldiers remained to die at their posts.

Bhavananda was watching the fun of it. "Comrades," he said, "the enemies are breaking away, come let us fall on them." Then the army of *Children* recrossed the river in large numbers with new zeal and ran to attack the infidels and fell on them. These had not the opportunity to fight again. Like the huge and proud mad tusker who was carried away by the waves of the Bhagirathi, the infidels were swept away by the *Children*. They found that behind them was Bhavananda's force and before them the guns. Captain Hay was then done for ; nothing remained for his forces then. All soldiers,—Foujdari and Badshahi, English and native, black and white—all fell or fled. Jivananda, Dhirananda and Bhavananda pursued them, took their guns, and killed many Europeans and sepoys. Seeing the disaster, Hay and Watson sent a message to Bhavananda offering to surrender and forbidding further bloodshed. Jivananda looked at Bhavananda but he said "No, that cannot be, I have got to die to-day." Then Bhavananda raised his hand and with a loud *Haribol* fell on them furiously.

No one survived the sally. Only 20 or 30 white soldiers gathered themselves in one place determined

to die and made a fierce fight. Jivananda said, "Bhavananda, we have won the fight ; no one but these few are now alive. There is no more need to fight. Come let us bid these men live and retire." Bhavananda said, "I am not going to retire while one of them lives ; Jivananda, I beseech you, stand apart and see how many Englishmen I slay alone."

Captain Thomas was tied to a horse. Bhavananda commanded him to be placed before him and said, "That fellow will die before myself."

Captain Thomas understood Bengali. He therefore said to the English soldiers, "Englishmen, I am dead, you must save the good name of old England. By Jesus Christ, I request you to kill me first and then these rebels."

A bullet hissed along. An Irishman had hit Captain Thomas. The brave Captain died with the bullet through his brain. Bhavananda then called out, "My best arrow is gone and I am done for. Who is there, what hero like Arjuna, Bhima, Nakul or Sahadeva that can save me? Look, the whites are making for me like a tiger that's hit. I have come to die. Is there any *Child* who wants to die with me?" The first to advance was Dhirananda, after him was Jivananda, and after them came ten, fifteen, twenty and then fifty *Children*. Seeing Dhirananda, Bhavananda asked, "Why, you too have come to die with us, Eh?"

"Why," answered Dhirananda, "Death is not your fee-simple." With this he wounded a white soldier

"I did not mean that," said Bhavananda, "but you cannot pass your days happily in the company of your wife and children."

"Oh, you are speaking of yesterday's affair. You have not understood it yet, I am afraid." (Dhirananda killed the wounded soldier).

"No," said Bhavananda. Just then his right arm was cut down by a white soldier.

"It was not for me to venture to tell you all those things. I was sent as a spy by Satyananda."

"What!", exclaimed Bhavananda, "the Master doubts my faith?" Bhavananda was fighting with one hand. Dhirananda defended him and said : "He heard with his own ears the conversation that passed between you and Kalyani."

"How?"

"He was then at that place. Look sharp!" (Bhavananda was struck by a white soldier but warded off the blow). "He was teaching Gita to Kalyani when you came. Take care." (Bhavananda's left hand too was now cut down).

B. Give him the news of my death and tell him I am no traitor.

Dhirananda's eyes were filled with tears. Fighting on, he said: "He knows it. Recall his blessing to you last night. He told me to-day, 'Keep near Bhavananda during the fight, he will die to-day. Tell him when he is dying that I have blessed him and am sure that he will reach *Baikuntha* after death'."

"Victory to the *Children*," cried Bhavananda. "Friends, let me once hear the song 'Hail, Mother' at the time of my death."

At Dhirananda's bidding, the *Children*, mad with fighting, sang 'Hail, Mother' with great gusto. Their arms were doubly strengthened by the song, and in that terrible moment the rest of the English army was slain. There was not one enemy left on the field.

At that moment Bhavananda breathed his last, singing 'Hail, Mother' and contemplating the blessed feet of Vishnu.

Ah! Woman's Beauty! What an accursed thing is it on earth.

Chapter XIII

After the battle was won the victors were jubilant over their success and made great demonstrations round Satyananda. But he was sad for Bhavananda's death.

So long the Vaishnavas had not much musical accompaniment of the fight, but now thousands of drums and *sanais*, trumpets and other instruments, appeared on the scene. The woods and wilds, the river and the hills, were all filled with the din of victory and its echo. After they had exulted thus for some time, Satyananda said : "Heaven has smiled on us and the *Children's* cause has come out victorious. But we have one work yet left to do. It will not do to forget those who can no more join us in our triumph and who have given up their lives to give us this festive occasion. Come, let us go and cremate those who are lying dead on the field. Specially should we do our duty by the hero who won this battle and died for us and cremate Bhavananda with due honour."

The *Children* then went in a body to cremate the dead, crying 'Hail, Mother.' Several men carried loads of sandal wood, crying *Haribol*, and with them built a pyre for Bhavananda. Laying him on it they fired the pyre and sang '*Hare Murare*' around it. The *Children* were worshippers of Vishnu but did not belong to the sect of the Vaishnavas. They therefore burnt their dead and did not bury them.

After that Satyananda, Jivananda, Mahendra, Nabinananda and Dhirananda sat down in the wood to deliberate. "The object with which we had so long renounced all pleasures and all other duties has been gained. There is no longer any infidel force in this part of the country. What remains of it will not be able to stand for a moment before us. What do you now advise us to do?"

Jivananda answered, "Let us now go and attack the capital."

"That is my opinion too," said Satyananda.

"Where is the army for it?", asked Jivananda.

J. "Why, these soldiers of ours?"

D. "Where are 'these soldiers?' Whom do you see here?"

J. They are resting at places. They will all come at the beat of our drum.

D. You won't find any one of them now.

"Why?" inquired Satyananda.

D. They are all out looting. The villages are unprotected now. They will now pillage the Mussulman villages and the silk-factory and return home. You will not find any one now. I have searched for them everywhere.

Satyananda was sorry but said : "However, this part of the country has come under our sway. There is no one here who can dispute our sovereignty. So you will now declare the *Children's* rule in the land of the Barendras. Levy taxes from the people and recruit an army for an attack on the city. Good many soldiers

will come under our flag if they hear that a Hindu kingdom has been established."

Then Jivananda and others bowed to him and said : " Maharaj, if you so command, we shall establish your throne in these woods."

Satyananda flew into a rage for the first time in his life. " For shame," he said, " do you take me for an empty vessel like that ? We are none of us a king ; we are all ascetics. The Lord of *Baikuntha* himself is the king of this country. When the city is conquered, you may give the crown to whomsoever you like, but know this for sure that no state but that of a monk shall be mine. You may now go to do your several duties."

Then the four bowed to Satyananda and rose to go, when Satyananda made a sign to Mahendra, to stay, unnoticed by others. The other three went away and Mahendra waited. Satyananda then said to him, " You all did take your vow in the temple of Vishnu. Bhavananda and Jivananda failed to keep it. Bhavananda has made the expiation promised. I am always in fear that some day Jivananda too will give up his life by way of expiation. I have one hope however ; for some secret reason he will not be able to die now. You alone have kept your faith. The object of the *Children* has been gained. Your vow was that you should not see the face of your wife and child till our work was done. Now it is done. You may now be a householder again."

Torrents of tears rained down Mahendra's cheeks.

He said : " Sire, with whom am I to build my home again? My wife poisoned herself before I took the vow, and I do not know where my daughter is. Nor do I know where I am to look for her. You told me she lives yet, and that is all that I know of her."

Satyananda then called Nabinananda and introduced this young ascetic to Mahendra with these words. " This is Nabinananda Goswami—a very pure soul and a favourite disciple of mine. Nabinanda will give you all information about your daughter." So saying, Satyananda made a sign to her. Santi understood the sign, bowed to him, and was about to go when Mahendra asked, " Where may I see you ?"

" Come to my cottage please," she said, and herself showed him the way.

Mahendra made his obeisance to Satyananda and departed with Santi to her cottage. The night was then far advanced, but Santi did not stop. She was going to the town.

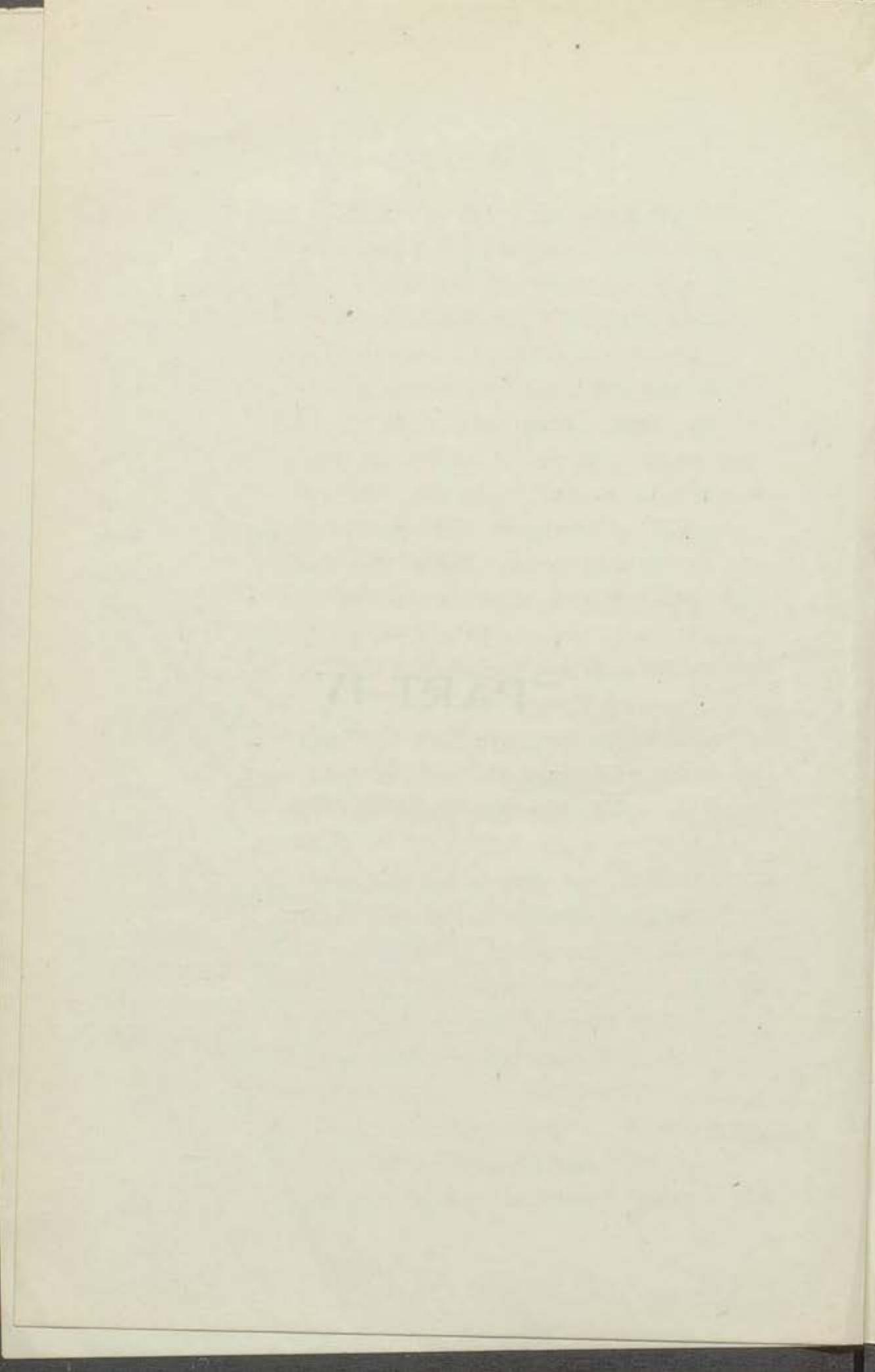
When all of them had left and the monk was alone, he bowed his head and, lowering it to the ground, engaged himself in meditating the glory of the Lord. The night was well nigh up when some one came and touched him on his head and said " I have come."

The monk rose startled, and anxiously said, " You have come? Why ?"

" Your time is up," was the answer.

" My lord," said Satyananda, " forgive me to-day, I shall do your bidding on the next full-moon day of Magh."

PART IV



Chapter I

On that night that part of the country rang with shouts of *Harinam*. Parties of *Children* went about everywhere, some singing 'Hail, Mother' and some '*Hare Murare*.' Some despoiled the fallen enemies of clothes and others of arms. Some would kick at the face of the dead and inflict other injuries. Some ran to the villages and others to the towns and then caught hold of passers-by or householders and said, "Say, Hail, Mother or you die." Some looted sweetmeat shops, others went to the milkmen's houses and sucked away potfuls of curd. During that night, the whole country was in a great ferment. Everybody said, "The Moslems have been defeated and the country has come back to the Hindus ; cry Hari, Hari." The villagers would chase any Mussulman that they would meet—some would combine and go to the Mussalman quarters to set fire to their houses and pillage them. Many Moslems shaved off their beards, smeared their bodies with earth and sung *Harinam*. When challenged, they would say in their own *patois* that they were Hindus.

The terrified Mussulmans flew to the city in large numbers. The State officials went bustling about and the remnant of the sepoy force ranged themselves for the defence of the town. In all the various points of the fortifications of the town, fully armed soldiers set themselves to mount guard with care. All men kept awake

the whole night and wondered what was coming. Hindus thought, "Let the Sannyasins come ; may mother Durga so ordain that this may happen." Mussulmans said, "Allaho Akbar ! Is the Quoran Sherif going to turn all false after such a long time ? We say our prayers at all the five prescribed hours, and yet we have not been able to defeat the rabble of Hindus with *tilaks* on their brow. Alas, the world is a huge sham." So some wept and some smiled and all passed the night on the tip-toe of fear.

All this reached Kalyani's ears ; in fact no one, old or young, was unaware of it. Kalyani said to herself, "God be praised, Thy work is done now. To day I shall go to see my husband, Madhusudan help me."

At the dead of night Kalyani left her bed, opened the backdoor, looked on all sides, and, finding nobody about, silently came out of Gouri Devi's house to the highway. She prayed to her own god and said "Look, lord, that I may not fail to see him at Padachinha to-night."

Kalyani arrived at the gate. The warder cried, "Who goes there ?" Kalyani was frightened and said, "I am a woman." The warder said, "Nobody may cross the gate, that's the order." This reached the ears of the Daffadar who said, "There is no prohibition against going out, it's only against anybody's coming in." The warder then said to Kalyani, in broken Bengali ; "Go, mother, there's no bar to your going. But it is a risky thing to venture out to-night. Who knows what may

happen to you? I do not know but that you might fall in the hands of robbers or into a ditch. This night, mother, you should not go out."

Kalayani said, "My child, I am a beggar woman and have not got a *cowrie* with me; the robbers, I am sure, won't molest me."

"But you have youth, mother," slyly observed the warder, "you have youth. That is the greatest jewel now-a-days. Why, even I may turn a robber for that."

Kalyani saw it was dangerous to stay there, and, without saying another word, slowly passed the watch. The warder saw that the 'mother' did not appreciate his joke, and in his anguish gave a mighty pull at his hemp and began a song of love in the *Jhinjhit Khambaj* tune. Kalyani went away.

On that night the roads swarmed with hoards of passers-by, some crying 'kill, kill' and others crying 'fly, fly,' some laughing and others crying. Everybody made for every one whom he saw. Kalyani was in great distress. She did not remember the way nor could she ask anybody how it lay, for everybody looked suspicious. She could only hide herself in the dark as she walked. Even while she was going on, she was discovered by a company of insolent and excited rebels. They made a loud shout and ran to catch hold of her. Kalyani then ran breathlessly into the woods. There too, some robbers followed her. One caught hold of the skirt of her cloth and said, "What now, my good creature?" At that movement another suddenly came up and gave a

blow to the miscreant with a stick. The fellow then fell back wounded. The person who now came was quite young, had a devotee's garbs, and had a black deer-skin over the breast. This person now said to Kalyani : " You need not fear, do just come with me. Where would you go ? "

" To Padachinha."

The new-comer started up. " What ! to Padachinha," the stranger exclaimed, and placing a hand on Kalyani's shoulder, gazed with care on her face in the dark.

Kalyani shuddered at this touch of what seemed to her a man's hand. She was struck with fear and amazement and her eyes filled with tears. It was not in her power to fly away, for she was stupefied with fear. The new-comer scrutinised her carefully and cried : "' *Hare Murare*,' I know you, you are the wretch Kalyani."

Kalyani was frightened. " Who are you ? " she asked.

" I am the slave of your slaves," said the new-comer. " O beauty, do thou look on me with favour."

Kalyani rushed away from the spot and said, burning with rage : " Was it to insult me thus that you saved my life ? I see you wear a celebate's garb, but is this the work of one of your order ? I am helpless now, or I would have kicked you at your face."

The ascetic said : " Oh, you smiling beauty, for a long time have I longed for a touch of your buxom person." So saying, the stranger rushed towards Kalyani

and held her in a deep embrace. Then Kalyani laughed heartily and said : "Bless thy wretched lot, I did not know that you were in the same boat with me."

Santi asked, " My friend, are you going in search of Mahendra ? " " Who are you," asked Kalyani, " you seem to know everything."

" I am a monk," was the answer, " a captain of the *Children's* army and a fearful hero ! I know everything. The road to Padachinha is so infested with sepoys and *Children* that you can never reach Padachinha to-night."

Kalyani wept.

Santi playfully turned her eyeballs as she said : " Why are you afraid ? We kill thousands with the shafts in our eyes. Come, let us go to Padachinha."

Kalyani thought herself immensely fortunate in having secured the aid of such a clever woman and said " I shall go wherever you take me."

Santi then led her on through the woods.

Chapter II

When Santi left her house at dead of night and left for the town, Jivananda was present there. She told him : " I am going to town to get Mahendra's wife. You just tell him that his wife lives."

Jivananda had heard from Bhavananda all about his saving Kalyani's life and he had heard of her present whereabouts from Santi who was wont to travel to all places. By and by he told all this to Mahendra.

Mahendra could not believe it at first and then he was overpowered with joy.

Next morning Mahendra and Kalyani met through the good offices of Santi. Before the birds and beasts had risen from their sleep, they met each other in that still forest, under the dark shade of the thickly-placed *sal* trees. There was none to witness the meeting, save the pale stars on the azure sky and the steady and endless line of trees. Afar there was the sweet murmur of some small rumbling stream that sang with the touch of pebbles, and anon there was the stray cooing of an early cuckoo, delighted with the glow on the crest of Dawn shining in the east.

When it was one *prahar** after daybreak, Jivananda and Santi appeared there. Kalyani said to Santi : " We are sold as slaves to you for the service you have

* One *prahar* is about three hours.

done us. Do just complete your kindness by informing me about my daughter."

Santi looked at Jivananda's face and said, "I shall sleep now. For the whole time I have not sat once ; for the last two nights I have had no rest. I have borne all this only because I am *such* a manly person."

Kalyani smiled a little. Jivananda looked at Mahendra and said : "I take that charge. You go to Padachinha ; there you will get your daughter."

Jivananda went to Bharuipur to get the child from Nimai. The work was not altogether easy.

Nimai first gulped a draught of air ; then she looked about ; then her lips and nostrils swelled ; at last she broke into tears and cried out : "I won't give you the child."

Nimai began to rub her eyes with the back of her round arms. This done, Jivananda said : "Well, but sister, why do you weep ? The place isn't far away. You might as well go to their house now and then and see the child."

Nimai's lips swelled again as she angrily retorted : "Well, well, take her away ; your thing you may take away ; what's that to me ?" She then brought Sukumari there, and, throwing her angrily before Jivananda, spread out her legs and sat down to cry. So, Jivananda did not speak more about it and began to speak of odd things of all sorts. But Nimai's anger was not soothed. She went away and began to throw before Jivananda one by one Sukumari's bundle of clothes, her box of

ornaments, the ribbons for her hair and her playthings. Sukumari began to arrange the things herself and asked Nimai : " Well, ma, Where am I to go ? " Nimai could bear it no longer. She took Sukumari in her lap and went away weeping.

Chapter III

Mahendra and Kalyani, Jivananda and Santi, Nimai and her husband were all of them together now in the new fort of Padachinha and were leading a happy life. Santi came dressed as Nabinananda. On the night on which she brought Kalyani to her cottage, she had asked her not to give out to her husband that she was a woman. One day, Kalyani called her into the zenana. Nabinananda came there. The servants forbade her but she would not hear.

On coming to Kalyani, Santi asked, "Why have you sent for me?" "How long are you going to dress yourself as a man?" inquired Kalyani : "I cannot talk to you peely. You must let my husband know of your identity."

Nabinananda grew very thoughtful and for a long time did not speak. At last he said, "Kalyani, there is great harm in that."

They then began to talk about it. Now, the servants who had forbidden Nabinananda from going into the zenana informed Mahendra that Nabinananda had entered there in spite of protest on their part. Mahendra grew curious and came to the zenana. On entering Kalyani's bed-room, he found Nabinananda standing in that room and Kalyani undoing the knots that fastened the tiger-skin to the breast of that ascetic.

Mahendra was amazed and very angry. Nabinananda

saw him and said smiling : " Well, Gossain, it comes to this then that one *Child* does not trust another ? "

Mahendra said, " Was Bhavananda Thakur worthy of trust ? "

Nabinananda turned her eyes as she said, " But did Kalyani touch him or unfasten the tiger-skin from his breast ? " He caught hold of Kalyani's hand and prevented her from doing it any longer.

" What of that ? " Mahendra asked.

" Well, you may suspect me, but how could you suspect Kalyani ? " asked Nabinananda.

Mahendra was confounded at this and said : " Why, how does it appear that I suspect her ? "

" Then why have you followed me at my heels to the zenana ? "

" Oh ! I came because I wanted to have a word with Kalyani."

" Then you may go now, I too have got something to say to Kalyani. You just go away and let me have my say first. It is your own house, you may always come and go. It is with difficulty that I have come once."

" Mahendra looked very foolish. He could not understand anything. These were not words that a guilty man could speak. Kalyani too behaved curiously. She did not fly away or get afraid nor did she look ashamed like an unfaithful wife ;—on the contrary she smiled softly. And, indeed, Kalyani, who so easily took poison for him,—could she be *unfaithful* ? Mahendra was turning all this, in her mind when the wretch of a Santi,

amused at Mahendra's discomfiture, smiled and threw a wistful look at Kalyani. The darkness was at once dispelled from Mahendra's eyes and he recognised that it was a woman's glance. Boldly he pulled by the beards of Nabinananda ; the false beards and moustache came off. Taking advantage of the moment, Kalyani too untied the knot that fixed the tiger-skin which slipped off from Santi's breast. Found out, Santi stood abashed with her eyes fixed on the ground.

Mahendra then asked Santi, "Who are you ?"

"I am Nabinananda Goswami."

"That's a sham, you are a woman !"

"So it turns out now."

"Then I shall ask you one thing ; why do you, being a woman, live constantly with Jivananda Thakur."

"It is better that I should not tell you *that*."

"Does Jivananda know that you are a woman ?"

"He does."

The pure-souled Mahendra was very sorry to hear this. Seeing him in such a plight, Kalyani could contain herself no longer and said, "She is Jivananda Goswami's married wife, Santi Devi."

For a moment Mahendra's face brightened up with joy. At the next, it was covered with gloom. Kalyani understood what was passing in his mind and said, "But she was sworn to a virgin life."

Chapter IV

Northern Bengal had slipped out of the hands of the Mussulmans. Mussulmans none of them, however, admitted it. They played hide and seek with the true state of things in this matter, and said that some plunderers were creating much disturbance and that they were about to suppress them. One does not know how long this game would have gone on had not Providence placed Warren Hastings in the office of the Governor-General at Calcutta. Hastings was not a man to play with his convictions,—if he had known the game, the British Empire in India would have been nowhere to-day. So a second General, named Major Edwards, presently arrived on the scene with a new army to suppress the *Children*.

Edwards saw, it was no warfare on European lines. The enemy had no army, no cities, no forts,—yet everything was under them. Whenever the British army encamped at any place, that place, was under the British sway for that day. The next day so soon as the British army left, “Hail, mother” were sung in that neighbourhood. The Major could not make out whence the *Children* emerged like an army of ants any night and how they burnt the village which may have fallen under British sway or killed small parties of British soldiers wherever they could find them. On enquiry he came to learn however that they had built a fort at Pada-chinha and were keeping their magazine and treasury

there. So he thought it expedient to take possession of that place.

By means of spies he obtained information as to how many soldiers there were in Padachinha. The information he received did not encourage him to make an attack on the fort. He then developed a clever device in his mind.

The full-moon day of Magh was nigh. On that day there would be held a big fair on the river bank not far from his camp. This year the fair was going to be held in great pomp. Usually at least a hundred thousand men assembled in the fair. This year the Vaishnavas had become the rulers of the land, and they had resolved to make a great show in the fair. The probabilities were that all the *Children* would assemble in the fair on the full-moon day. Major Edwards thought that the defenders of Padachinha too would all come to the fair which would give him an opportunity to surprise and occupy the fort.

With this object in view, he announced that he would make an attack on the fair and root out the *Children's* community on a single day when they would come together at one place. He would destroy the fire of the Vaishnavas.

The news spread from village to village and whoever belonged to the community donned his arms and flocked to the fair for its defence. The *Children* all assembled on the bank of the river on the full-moon day of Magh just as the Major had expected. Fortunately for

the English, Mahendra too put his feet into the trap, and, leaving a small garrison in the fort, left Padachinha with the majority of the troops for the fair.

Jivananda and Santi had come out of Padachinha before all this happened. Then there was no talk of a fight nor were they anxious for it at the time. They had thought to sacrifice their lives as an expiation for breaking their vow in the holy water at an auspicious hour of that holy full-moon day of Magh. But on the way they heard that there would be a great fight of the assembled *Children* with Englishmen in the fair. Then Jivananda said, "Come then, we would rather die in battle."

They began to walk fast. The road passed at one spot over a mound and when they got on it the heroic pair saw that below and not far from the mound stood the English camp. "Leave alone the talk of death just now," said Santi, "and cry 'Hail, Mother!'"

Chapter V

The two then had a short deliberation in whispers ; which done, Jivananda hid himself in a thicket. Santi entered another and engaged herself in a fine fun.

She was going to die, but she had determined to die in a woman's dress. As Mahendra had told her, her male costume was a mask and she could not carry it on to death. So he had brought out with her the basket which contained her toilette an ^owomanly dress.

Having put on her smart nose-print with a little catechu patch between the eye-brows and covering her blooming face with fine short curls after the fashion of the day, Santi equipped herself with a *sareng* and appeared in the guise of a singing Vaishnavi girl in the camp of the Englishmen. Her sight upset the sepoys in their jet black beards and moustache. Some bid her sing love songs, some would have *Ghuzl*, others asked songs to Kali and other again would hear about Krishna. Some gave her rice, some dal, some sweets, some pice and some again four-anna pieces. The *Vaishnavi* then carefully informed herself of the state of the camp and was about to leave, when the sepoys asked her as to when she was going to pay them another visit.

"Can't say," she answered, "I live at a great distance."

"How far ?," asked they.

"I live at Padachinha," was the answer.

Now, the Major had on that day been trying to get some informations about Padachinha, and this one of the sepoys knew. He took the Vaishnavi to the Captain and the Captain took her to the Major. Before the Major, the Vaishnavi smiled a maddening smile and casting a wistful glance at him that pierced his heart, she struck her small tambourine and sang the sanskrit song :

"To lay the Mlechha low with the sword relentless." The Major asked her in broken Bengali, "Where do you live, *Bibi*?"

"I am not a *Bibi* but a Vaishnavi ; I live at Padachinha."

"Well, that is Padsin, Padsin is it?", said the Captain in English, and then continued in Hindi, "is there a *gurh** there?"

"*Ghar*? Oh, there are plenty of *ghars*."†

"No, no, not *ghar* but *gurh*, *gurh*!" said the Major. Yet so were the words pronounced that there was absolutely no distinction between the two.

"I understand what you mean," said Santi, "you mean *gurh*?"

"Yes, yes, *gurh*, *gurh*, is there a *gurh*?"

"Oh yes, a great fort."

"How many men?"

"You mean how many men live there? Oh, it is about 20 or 50 thousand."

* *Gurh* is a fort.

† *Ghar* is a house.

"Nonsense, there can be only two to four thousand in a fort. Now, are they there at present or are they gone out?"

"Where could they go out?"

"To the fair. When did you leave the place?"

"Yesterday, sahib."

"Oh then, they must have gone out to-day."

Santi was musing within herself: "In vain have I donned my nose-print if I can't plot your ruin. I only want to see when jackals would be eating your head." To the Major she said, "I do not know all that. I am a Vaishnavi and go about singing from door to door. I do not care to keep these informations. Now I am quite tired of talking, give me my pice and let me go. And, if you care to reward me well, I will get you the informations day after tomorrow if you mind it."

The Major threw a rupee at her and said: "Not day after tomorrow, *Bibi*!"

"Off you wretch, say Vaishnavi and not *Bibi*."

"Not day after tomorrow, I want the information this evening."

"Yes, you go to sleep with that pleasant thought with wine and a gun in your head and oil in your nostrils! To think that I shall be going these twenty miles of the way and come back again to give him the news! *chuchu beta*."

"What's a *chuchu beta*?"

"A hero—a great general."

"Great general! well, I may be one like Clive. But

I want the information tonight. A hundred rupees will be your reward."

"Give a hundred or a thousand, what you will, but these legs can't cover twenty miles."

"Could you go on horseback?"

"If I could ride a horse, do you think I should be coming to your camp to sing and beg?"

"Well, you may be carried on the lap."

"On the lap! Why, have I no modesty?"

"What a fix! I'll pay you five hundred rupees."

"Who will go with me? Yourself?"

The Major then pointed to a young Ensign named Lindlay who stood before him and asked, "Well Lindlay, would you go?"

Lindlay looked at Santi's beauty and youth, and answered, "gladly."

A great Arab horse was then brought there and Lindlay dressed himself. He then tried to help Santi on the horse but Santi said, "For shame! not before so many men. Let's go a little way out of the camp."

Lindlay mounted the horse and took it at a walking pace, Santi following. So they came out of the camp.

Reaching the lonely plain out of the camp, Santi put her foot on Lindlay's and lightly jumped on the horse. Lindlay smiled and said, "I see you are a *pucca* rider."

"Yes, such a one that I am ashamed to ride with you! To think of riding a horse with feet in the stirrup! For shame!"

Lindlay proudly took away his feet from the stirrup. Santi instantly caught him by the neck and threw him to the ground. Then seating herself on the horse *a la mode*, she spurred her horse with her anklets, and rode away in full speed. During the four years that she had spent with the *Children*, Santi had learnt the art of riding, or else she could not have lived with Jivananda.

Santi went to the spot where Jivananda lay concealed and informed him of the state of affairs. Jivananda said : "Then I shall instantly go to warn Mahendra ; you better go and inform Satyananda. Go on horseback, so that the Master may be informed of it early." And the two started off in opposite directions. Needless to say, Santi was now transformed into Nabinananda.

Chapter VI

Edwards was a *pucca* Englishman. He had a scout at every point and the news soon reached him that the Vaishnavi had thrown Lindlay off his horse and herself rode off. As soon as he heard this, Edwards said : "An imp of Satan ! Strike the tents."

Instantly there was a great noise of hammers falling on the tent-posts. Like an Elysian city built of clouds, the city of canvas disappeared in a moment. Luggages were thrown on carts, men rode off or walked on foot. Hindus and Mussulmans, Madrassees and English, marched solemnly on with guns on their shoulders.

Mahendra, on the other hand, was on the way to the fair with the whole host of the *Children*. That afternoon he was thinking of encamping his forces as the day was drawing to a close.

The Vaishnavas had no camps ; they spread their humble beddings under trees and slept on it, living on *churnamrita* and making up the deficit by dreaming sweets dreams. Close by was a place fit for encampment. It was a big garden full of mango, jack-fruit, tamarind and *babla* trees. Mahendra chose this place for encampment. Beside it was a mound that was rather steep. Mahendra thought that on the mound there would be better site for the purpose and thought he would reconnoitre the spot himself.

He therefore sprang on a horse and slowly rode up

the mound. After he had gone some way up the mound, a young soldier came before the Vaishnava army and said : "Come and mount up the hill."

Those who stood by asked in surprise, "Why?"

The soldier stood on a small mound and said : "Come, we shall have to fight the foe on the hill yonder in this moonlit night, enjoying all the while the sweet odour of the new flowers of the spring." The *Children* saw it was Jivananda who spoke.

Then the whole army sprang up leaning upon spears with a loud shout of "*Hare Murare*," and rushed up the hill after Jivananda. One of the soldiers brought him a horse which he rode.

From a distance, Mahendra was surprised to see the army march without his orders. He therefore turned his horse and rushed down at full speed. Seeing Jivananda in front of the *Children's* force, he asked : "Now, what fun is this?"

Jivananda smiled and said : "It's a great fun—great joy. On the other side of the hill is Edwards. Who mounts the hill first gains the battle." Addressing the army he said, "Do you know me? I am Jivananda Goswami, I have killed a thousand foes!"

The army replied with a voice that rang the woods and wilds to the echo. "Say, then, *Hare Murare*," said Jivananda. The war cry was repeated from thousands of throats that rang throughout the woods.

"On the other side of the hill is the enemy. On the summit of this mound and under the blue sky will the

Children fight their battle. Run fast. He who will first mount the summit will win. Say 'Hail, mother'!"

This cry was likewise honoured with great zest. Solemnly the *Children's* force ascended the hill ; but suddenly they saw with dismay that Mahendra Sinha was fast riding down the hill and blowing his trumpet. Presently the crest of the hill was filled with English guns and gunners standing out against the azure sky. The Vaishnava force sang catches from the song, " Hail, Mother " but the roar of the English guns soon drowned the solemn music. Hundreds of *Children* lay low on the hills with their arms on them, killed or wounded. 'Boom-oom-oom-oom' roared out another volley from the English guns, shaming the thunder of the sky and the roar of breakers in the sea. The *Children's* army were hewed down by it as ripe crops are by the peasant's scythe. In vain did Jivananda and Mahendra fight,—like rolling stones the *Children* rushed from the hill and fled in all directions. " Hurrah ! Hurrah !" shouted the English and marched down the hill to slay the whole force. With their bayonets lowered, the fearful and invincible British army rushed after the *Children* like a great waterfall emerging from the hills.

Only once did Jivananda meet Mahendra and then he said : " To-day is our last day ; come, let us die here."

" If by dying we could win," said Mahendra, " I would willingly die ; but to die in vain is not the hero's ambition."

" In vain will I die," said Jivananda, " if in vain it

is to be ; but still I will die in battle." He then turned round, and, addressing the fugitives, said : " Come with me any one who wishes to die with the name of the Lord on his lips."

Many came forward, but Jivananda said : " That won't do ; swear in the name of the Lord that you will not turn back with your life."

Those that had come forward withdrew. " None of you will come ?" asked Jivananda. " All right ! then I will go alone."

He then got himself on his saddle, and shouted to Mahendra who was far away : " Tell Nabinananda that I go. We will meet in the next world."

So saying the brave man spurred on his horse into the thick of the fight amid showers of bullets. With his left hand he held a spear, in his right a gun, and in his mouth was the cry of "*Hare, Murare.*" There was no likelihood of anything like warfare ; still he shouted "*Hare, Murare*" and rushed into the ranks of the enemy.

Mahendra then called out to the flying *Children* : " Look, you all do just look at Jivananda ; you can't be dying if you only look at him."

Some of the *Children* turned round and saw the superhuman feat of Jivananda. They were at first astonished at this and then exclaimed : " What ! he knows how to die and not we ? Come let us die with him and go to *Baikuntha*."

At this some *Children* returned, and some of those

followed their example, and they were joined by others—there was a great uproar. Jivananda had in the meantime entered the ranks of the enemy, and they saw him no more.

The rest of the *Children* now saw that some of them were returning. Every one thought that the *Children* must have won the fight. The whole army therefore turned round and rushed upon the English force.

Among the English forces too there was a great confusion. The sepoys were forsaking the fight and running away, the English soldiers too were making for their camp with their arms. Looking round for an explanation Mahendra found, on the summit of the hill, a large contingent of *Children* rushing down the hill on the English from behind. He then called out to his soldiers: " *Children*, look, there is Master Satyananda's flag. The Lord Incarnate himself, the slayer of demons and wicked men, have come to the fight. Myriads of *Children* are on the hill. Say 'Hare, Murare' and crush the Mussulman force from both sides."

The woods and wilds were then deeply stirred with their loud shout in response. The weapons of the *Children* mixed their clatter with the sound of the palm leaves waved by the wind ; Mahendra's army proudly mounted the hill and like stream turned back by a rock the State forces were stunned, disturbed and struck with fear. Satyananda, in the meanwhile, with his twenty-five thousand *Children*, fell upon them like the rushing sea and a tremendous fight ensued.

The huge force of the English were crushed like a fly between two stones, and not one was left to carry the news to Warren Hastings.

Chapter VII

It was the full-moon night. The fearful field of battle was now still. There was no more the patter of horses, the rumble of guns, or the roar of cannons—no more the ‘Hurrahs’ and the cries of “Hari Hari.” The only sound was that of jackals, dogs and vultures shouting, and the piteous momentary wail of the wounded. Some one had his hand cut off, another had his head broken ; some was shot through the ribs, some, again was weighed down by the carcass of a horse. Some cried for water and some others anxiously wished for death. Bengalees, Hindustanis, Englishmen, Mussulmans were all huddled together. The living and the dead, men and horses, were mixed up and lay on one another. The field of carnage looked fearful under the full moon and in the night of Magh no one dared come there.

No one dared, but in the dead of that night a woman was walking in that field. She was looking about for something from amid the mass of the dead with a torch in her hand. She took the torch near the face of every one of the bodies, watched it carefully and then moved away to another spot. At places a body lay under the carcass of a horse. The young woman would there lay down the torch on the ground, remove the carcass with both hands and recover the body. When she found however that it was not what she was looking for, she would take up the torch and go elsewhere. She thus

searched the whole field, but could nowhere find what she wanted. She then threw down the torch, dropped herself on the ground smeared with blood and spread with dead bodies and wept bitterly. It was Santi ; she was looking for Jivananda's body.

She was thus weeping when a sweet and gentle voice reached her ear ; somebody said, "Rise, mother, do not weep." Santi looked up and saw standing before her in the moonlight the wonderful figure of a saint with a head full of clotted hair.

Santi stood up. The saint said : "Don't weep, mother. I shall look out Jivananda's body for you." Then the great man took Santi to the middle of the field where innumerable dead bodies were thrown upon one another in a heap. Santi had not been able to remove them all. That most powerful man removed the heap of the dead and dragged out one. Santi knew that it was Jivananda's body, scarred with wounds and smeared with blood. Santi cried aloud like a common woman.

He said, "Don't weep mother. Are you sure Jivananda is dead ? Just examine his body with care. First feel the pulse."

Santi felt the pulse, there was not the slightest quickness in it. The saint said, "Feel the chest with your touch." Santi did it but there was no beating there, all was cold.

He then said, "Feel the nostrils and see if there is the slightest breath."

Santi did so—there was nothing to be felt. The saint said : " See again, put your finger into the mouth and see if there is any warmth there." Santi did as she was bid and answered " I cannot quite feel if there is." She had been lured into a half-belief by hope.

The saint touched the body with his left hand and said : " You have been stunned by fear and can't feel it. I think some heat is left yet in the body. Feel once again."

Santi again felt the pulse and found that it was stirring. Astonished, she put her hand on the breast,—the heart was beating. She felt for the breath and found that there was some motion. There was also some warmth in the mouth. She was astonished and said, " Was life really left or has it come anew ? "

" That can never be," he answered ; " could you carry him to the bank of the pond there. I am a physician, I shall treat him."

Santi carried Jivananda with ease and took him to the water. The physician said : " Take him to the tank and wash away the blood. I am coming with some medicine." Santi did as she was bid and the physician shortly arrived with a paste made of wild plants and creepers. He applied the preparation to the sores and then passed his hand over Jivananda's body for some time. Jivananda then sat up with a sigh and asked Santi : " Who have won the fight ? "

" Yours has been the victory," replied Santi : " Make your obeisance to this great man."

They both looked for him, but lo ! no one was there.

The triumphant shouts of the victorious army were heard close by, but neither Santi nor Jivananda rose to go. She stood still on the steps of the tank shining under the full-moon above. Jivananda grew well very shortly under the influence of the healing balm, and said, "Santi, the effect of the physician's drug is wonderful. I have no more got any pain or discomfort in my body ; I am prepared to go where you choose. Hark, there are the triumphal shouts of the *Children*!"

"None of that, any more," replied Santi. "Our Mother's work is done and the country has come under the sway of the *Children*. We don't want to share the sovereignty, why then should we go there any more?"

"That which we have taken by force," said Jivananda, "we have to keep by force."

"For that there is Mahendra and Satyananda himself," replied Santi. "To expiate your transgression you laid down your body for the benefit of your faith. The *Children* have no more any claim on your revived life. To the *Children*, we are dead. If they see us returning now they will say 'Jivananda fled for fear of life at the time of the battle and now that we are victorious, he has come to share our spoils.'"

"You mean to say," said Jivananda, "that we shall forbear doing our duty for fear of scandal ! Service of the Mother is my duty and I will do it no matter what people may say."

"To that you have no claim," said Santi, "for, you

have sacrificed your body in the service of your mother-land. If you can serve her still, your expiation becomes nugatory. To be deprived of the pleasure of the service is the greater part of the expiation. For the rest, it is not a very great thing for anybody to give up the trifle that life is."

"Santi, yours it is to dive into the essence of things," said Jivananda; "I shall not leave my sacrifice incomplete. My greatest joy is in my noble creed and I will deny myself its pleasure. But where can I go? It is out of question to renounce the *Children's* mission only to enjoy the pleasures of home life!"

"That's not what I should ask you to do," she replied. "We can no more be householders. We shall be ascetics like this for ever and keep for ever the vow of virginity. Come, let us now go about visiting the shrines."

"What when we have done that?" enquired Jivananda.

"After that we shall build ourselves a hut on the Himalayas, worship our God, and ask for the blessing that good may be our Mother's share."

Then the two rose and departed, hand in hand,—to eternity it would seem—in the dead of that moonlit night.

Oh Mother! would they come again? Would you ever bear again a son like Jivananda and a daughter like Santi?

Chapter VIII

After the battle Satyananda retired to the Abbey without speaking a word to anybody. At dead of night, he was there engaged in deep meditation in the temple of Vishnu when the physician put in his appearance in the room. Seeing him Satyananda stood up and made his obeisance.

"Satyananda," said the physician, "to-day is the full-moon day of Magh!"

"Yes," said Satyananda, "and I am ready to follow you. But sire, please explain to me the one thing that puzzles me. Why does the command to desist come to me at just the moment when I have won a victory and made the glory of the True Faith free from obstacles?"

The new-comer said : "Your mission has been fulfilled, the Mussulman rule has come to an end. You have nothing more to do now. It's no use killing people in vain."

"Yes, the Mussulman rule has come to an end, but the power of the Hindus have not yet been established. The English are still powerful at Calcutta."

"The Hindu rule will not be established now. You will only cause needless bloodshed by staying on."

Satyananda was stung with sharp anguish at these words. "Sire," he said, "who is then to become the

sovereign if it is not the Hindus? Is it the Mussulman that will return to power?"

Tears flowed down the cheeks of Satyananda. Looking up to the image of the Motherland above, he folded his hands and, in a voice choked with grief, said : " Alas Mother, with all my devotion, I have failed to save thee. Again will you fall into the hands of infidels. Mother, forgive thy child for its failings. Alas! why did I not fall in the battle-field to-day ? "

" Satyananda." said the physician, " Grieve not. In your delusion, you have won your victories with the proceeds of robbery. A vice never leads to good consequences and you may never expect to save your country by a sinful procedure. And, really, what will happen now will be for the best. There is no hope of a revival of the True Faith if the English be not our rulers. Listen to me and I shall explain the position to you as great men have understood it. The True Faith does not consist in the worship of 330 million deities ; that is only a base religion of the masses. Under its influence the True Faith, which Mlecchas call Hinduism, has disappeared. The true Hinduism is based on knowledge and not on action. This knowledge is of two kinds, subjective and objective. The subjective knowledge is the essential part of the True Faith, but till you have objective knowledge the subjective knowledge can never grow. Till you know the gross matter you cannot know the subtle spirit. It is very long now since objective knowledge has disappeared from our

country ; and with it has vanished the True Religion too. To revive it therefore you have first to disseminate objective knowledge. We have not now got the knowledge in this country, nor are there men to impart it, for we are not skilful in educating people. Therefore, objective knowledge must be imported from elsewhere. The English are great in objective sciences and they are apt teachers. Therefore, the English shall be made our sovereign. Imbued with a knowledge of objective sciences by English education our people will be able to comprehend subjective truths. Then there would no difficulties to the spread of the True Faith ;—it will then shine forth of itself. Till that is so, till the Hindus are great again in knowledge virtue and power, till then the English rule will remain undisturbed. The people will be happy under them and follow their own religion without hindrance. You are wise ; consider all these, desist from fight with the English and follow me.

"Sire," said Satyananda, "if it is your will that the English shall become our ruler, if it is really good for the country at this hour to be under English rule, why then did you employ me in this cruel warfare ?"

"The English," said the great man, "are now traders and are unwilling to take charge of the administration. They will have to do it however, as the result of this rebellion of the *Children* ; for without doing so, they will see, they cannot raise money. The rebellion was raised, only that the English might be initiated into sovereignty."

Come with me now to gain knowledge and you will understand all this yourself."

"I have no desire to gain knowledge," returned Satyananda, "I have nothing to do with knowledge. I shall pursue the mission that I have undertaken. Bless me, that my devotion to the Mother may remain unabated."

"Your mission has been fulfilled; you have done good to your Mother and established the English rule. Give up fighting, let people engage themselves in agriculture, and the country overflow with crops and flourish.

Fire flashed from Satyanandas eyes. "I will soak the earth," he said, "with the blood of enemies and fertilise it!"

"Where is the enemy now? There is none. The English are a friendly power, and no one, in truth, has the power to come off victorious in a fight with the English."

"If that is so, I shall sacrifice my life before this image of the Mother."

"In ignorance? Why, come with me and you will have light. There is a temple of the Mother on the Himalayas; from there I shall show you the Mother's form."

So saying the great man took Satyananda by the hand. What a lovely sight that was! The two great and radiant forms holding each other's hand in the dim light of that solemn chamber and before the noble image of Vishnu. It was as if, knowledge took the hand of Devotion, Faith of Action; sacrifice, of active

Duty, Kalyani of Santi! This Satyananda was Santi
and the great man Kalyani! Satyananda was Active
Duty and the great man Sacrifice. Sacrifice took away
Active Duty.

Appendix I

SANNYASI REBELLION

You will hear of disturbances committed by the Sannyasis, or wandering Fakirs, who annually infest the province, about this time of the year in pilgrimages to Jaggarnaut going in bodies of 1000 and sometimes even 10,000 men. An officer of reputation (Captain Thomas) lost his life in an unequal attack upon a party of these banditti about 3000 of them, near Rungpore with a small party of Pergona Sepoys, which has made them more talked of than they deserve. The revenue, however, has felt the effects of their ravages in the northern districts. The new establishment of Sepoys which is now forming on the plan enjoined by the Court of Directors and the distribution of them ordered for the internal protection of the provinces, will, I hope, effectually secure them hereafter from these incursions,—
Hastings to Sir George Colebrooke—dated 2nd February 1773—Gleig's Memoirs Vol. 1282.

Our own province has worn something of a warlike appearance, this year, having been infested by a band of Sannyasis, who have defeated two small parties of Pur-gunnah Sepoys (a rascally corps) and cut off the two officers who commanded them. One was Captain Thomas whom you know. Four battalions of the brigade Sepoys are now in pursuit of them, but they will not stand any engagement and have neither camp equipage, nor even clothes, to retard their flight. Yet I hope we shall yet make an example of some of them as they are shut in by rivers which they cannot pass when closely pursued.

The history of the people is curious. They inhabit or rather possess the country lying south of the hills of Tibbet from Caubul to China. They go mostly naked. they have neither towns, houses, nor families ; but rove continually from place to place recruiting their number with the healthiest children they can steal in the countries through which they pass. Thus they are the stoutest and the most active men in India. Many are merchants. They are all pilgrims and held by all castes of Gentoos in great veneration. This infatuation prevents our obtaining any intelligence of their motions or aid from the country against them, notwithstanding very rigid orders which have been published for these purposes, in so much that they often appear in the heart of the province as if they dropt from heaven. They are hardy, bold and enthusiastic to a degree surpassing credit. Such are the Sannyassis, the Gipsies of Hindustan.

We have dissolved all the purgunah Sepoys and fixed stations of the brigade Sepoys on our frontiers, which are to be employed only in the defence of the provinces, and to be relieved every three months. This I hope will secure the peace of the country against future irruptions, and as they are no longer to be employed in the collections, the people will be freed from the oppressions of our own plunderers. *Hastings to Josias Du Pre,—9th March, 1773.*

We have lately been much troubled here by hordes of desperate adventurers called Sannyasis, who have overrun the province in great numbers and committed great depredations. The particulars of these disturbances and of our endeavours to repel them you will find in our general letters and consultations, which will acquit the Government of any degree of blame from such a calamity. At this time we have five battalions of Sepoys in pursuit of them, and I have still hopes of exacting ample vengeance for the mischief they have done us, as they have no advantage over us but in the speed with

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which they fly from us. A minute relation of these adventures can not amuse you, nor indeed are they of great moment, for which reason give me leave to drop the subject, and lead you to one in which you can not but be most interested, &c. *Hastings to Purling—dated 31st March—1775—para 1 Gleig's Memoirs of Hastings—267 Vol. I.*

In my last I mentioned that we had every reason to suppose the Sannyasi Fakkeers had entirely evacuated the Company's possesions. Such were the advices I then received, and their usual progres made this highly probable. But it seems they were either disappointed in crossing the Burramputrah river, or they changed their intention, and returned in several bands of about 2000 or 3000 each, appearing unexpectedly in different parts of the Rungpoor and Dinagepoor province. For in spite of the strictest orders issued and the severest penalties threatened to the inhabitants in case they fail in giving intelligence of the approach of the Sannyasies, they are so infatuated by superstition as to be backward in giving the information so that the banditti are sometimes advanced into the very heart of provinces before we know anything of their motions; as if they dropt from heaven to punish the inhabitants for their folly. One of these parties falling in with a small detachment commanded by Captain Edwardes, an engagement ensued wherein our Sepoys gave way. Captain Edwardes lost his life in endeavouring to cross a Nullah. This detachment was formed of the worst of our pergauna Sepoys, who seemed to have behaved very ill. This success elated the Sannyasies, and I heard of their depredations from every quarter in those districts. Captain Stewart, with the nineteenth battalion of Sepoys, who was before employed against them, was vigilant in the pursuit wherever he could hear of them, but to no purpose. They were gone before he could reach the place to which he was directed. I ordered another battalion from Burram-

poor to march immediately to co-operate with Captain Stewart, but to act separately in order to have the better chance of falling in with them. At the same time I ordered another battalion to march from the Dinapoor Station through Tyroot and by the northern frontier of the Purneah province, following the track which the Sannyasies usually took, in order to intercept them in case they marched that way. This battalion after acting against the Sannyasies, if occasion offered, was directed to pursue their march to Cooch Behar, where they are to join Captain Jones and assist in the reduction of the country.

Several parties of the Sannyasies having entered into the Purneah province, burning and destroying many villages there, the Collector applied to Captain Brook who had just arrived at Panity near Rajmahal, with his newly raised battalion of light infantry. That officer immediately crossed the river and entered upon measures against the Sannaysies, and had very near fallen in with a party of them, just as they were crossing the Cosa river, to escape out of thatd province. They arrive on the opposite bank before their rear had entirely crossed, but too late to do any execution among them. It is apparent now that the Sannaysies are glad to escape as fast as they can out of the Company's possession, but I am still in hopes, that some of the detachments now acting against them may fall in with some of their parties, and punish them exemplarily for their audacity.

It is impossible but that on account of the various depredations which the Sannaysies have committed that revenue must fall short in some of the company's districts as well from real as from pretended losses. The Board of Revenue aware of this last consideration, have come to the resolution of admitting no pleas for a reduction of revenue but such as are attended with circumstances of conviction : and by this means they hope to prevent, as much as is in their power, all impositions on

the government, and to render the loss to the Company as inconsiderable as possible. Effectual means will be used by stationing some small detachments at proper posts on our frontier to prevent any future incursions from the Sannyasies Fakkeers, or any other roving banditti, a measure which only the extraordinary audacity of their last incursion have manifested to be necessary. This will be effected without employing many troops, and I hope that in no future time the Sannyasies shall again suffer from this cause—*Hastings to Sir George Colebrooke—dated 31st March 1773.*

The Sannyasies threatened us with the same disturbances from the beginning of this year as we experienced from them the last. But by being easily provided to oppose them, and one or two severe checks which they received in their first attempt, we have kept the country clear of them. A party of horse, which we employed in pursuit of them, has chiefly contributed to intimidate these ravagers, who seemed to pay little regard to our Sepoys, having so much the advantage of them in speed, on which they entirely rely for their safety. It is my intention to proceed more effectually against them by expelling them from their fixed residence, which they have established in the north eastern quarter of the province, and by making severe examples of the Zemindars, who have afforded them protection or assistance—*Hastings to Lawrence—30th March 1771.*

Appendix II

HISTORY OF THE SANNYASI REBELLION

A set of lawless banditti, wrote the Council in 1773, known under the name of Sanyasis or Fakirs, have long infested these countries, and under pretence of religious pilgrimage, have been accustomed to traverse the chief part of Bengal, begging stealing and plundering wherever they go, and as it best suits their convenience to practise. In the years subsequent to the famine, their ranks were swollen by a crowd of starving peasants, who had neither seed nor implements to recommence cultivation with, and the cold weather of 1772 brought them down upon the harvest-fields of Lower Bengal, burning, plundering, ravaging in bodies of fifty to thousand men. The Collectors called on the military; but after a temporary success, our Sepoys were at length totally defeated and Captain Thomas their leader with almost the whole party cut off. It was not till the close of the winter that the Council could report to the Court of Directors, that a battalion under an experienced commander had acted successfully against them, and a month later we find that even this tardy intimation had been premature. On the 31 March, 1774. Warren Hastings plainly acknowledges that, the commander who had succeeded Captain Thomas unhappily underwent the same fate; that four battalions of the army were then actively engaged against the banditti, but that in spite of the militia levies called from the landholders, their combined operations had been fruitless. The revenue could not be collected, the inhabitants made common cause with

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the marauders and the whole rural administration was unhinged. Such incursions were annual episodes in what some have been pleased to represent as the still life of Bengal.—*Hunter's Annals of Rural Bengal*—
—P. 77. 2.

